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# Husserl on Concepts in Perception

van Mazijk, Corijn

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# HUSSERL ON CONCEPTS IN PERCEPTION

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# Husserl on Concepts in Perception

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**Corijn Mattheus Arie van Mazijk**

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**Promotores**
Prof. dr. D. H. K. Pätzold
Prof. dr. N. F. De Warren

**Beoordelingscommissie**
Prof. dr. D. Moran
Prof. dr. M. Lenz
Prof. dr. A. Robiglio
Prof. dr. J. Jansen

KU Leuven
Groep Humane Wetenschappen
Hoger Instituut voor Wijsbegeerte


# HUSSERL ON CONCEPTS IN PERCEPTION

Corijn Mattheus Arie van Mazijk

Promotor:
Prof. N. F. de Warren

Proefschrift voorgedragen tot het behalen van de graad van Doctor in de Wijsbegeerte

Juni 2017

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# Preface

The present dissertation is the result of three and a half year of funded research conducted mostly at the University of Groningen, KU Leuven, University of Copenhagen, and Boston University. During my research, I have had the pleasure to meet many interesting people whose thoughts and feedback to mine have helped define the content of this work. While I am most grateful to all of them, I feel that the following are worth specific mentioning.

First of all my supervisors Detlev Pätzold and Nicolas de Warren, whose efforts and patience undoubtedly have been essential to the completion of this project. I am further particularly grateful for the philosophical conversations I enjoyed with friends and colleagues, including Yuko Ishihara, Willem de Witte, Patrick Elridge, Joel Hubick, Ian Road, Andrew Barrette, Steven Willemsen, Jared James, Andrea Staiti, James Jardine, Dermot Moran, Lars Adams, Dan Zahavi, Marco Cavallaro, Søren Overgaard, Andrea Cimino, Tim Crane, Thomas Arnold, Tycho Barnard, Jon Andersson, Walter Hopp, Zach Joachim, Ruud Wassink, Dan Solecki, Sabine van Enckevort, Eddo Evink, Ullrich Melle, Julia Jansen, Maren Wehrle, Stefano Micali, Derek van Zoonen, and Thomas Szanto. I know there were many, many others, and if you feel I forgot to mention you, I will try to make it up to you some other time. Of course, all support offered by family members and friends whose philosophical commitments are not so thorough is valued no less.

I can hardly express what a tremendous joy it has been for me to work on this topic. I am very grateful to the University of Groningen for the opportunity to conduct my research and for providing such an outstandingly professional working environment. I am thankful for the freedom I have been granted in developing my research plans and for the trust I was afforded with from early onwards, which I have always found quite amazing. Knowing what kind of struggle writing a dissertation can be for some, I consider myself lucky not to have had a mere second of regret yet in my personal discoveries of the wonderful world of philosophy.

# Introduction

This dissertation addresses the role of concepts in perception in Husserl's philosophy. This theme makes it, first of all, a work in Husserl scholarship. At the same time, the role of concepts in perception is also fervently discussed in contemporary philosophy, particularly among certain branches of mainstream epistemology and philosophy of mind. In the second instance, therefore, this dissertation can be considered a work in contemporary philosophy. I have executed this research under the presumption that there need be no conflict between these two contexts. Focusing on Husserl serves to shed new light on contemporary discussions and some of its more tacit presuppositions no less than those discussions may help enrich our understanding of Husserl.

Doubtlessly there have been many works written in the broader phenomenological discourse that were meant to be read primarily or even exclusively by phenomenological philosophers. The topic of this investigation does not, I think, invite such an approach. I personally also believe there is more important work to be done with phenomenology outside its own boundaries than within. Especially in the field of epistemology the influence of Husserl could still be said to be marginal – which is somewhat ironic given Husserl's own understanding of the phenomenological enterprise. I hope this dissertation may ultimately live on to contribute something to Husserl's prominence within today's wider fields of philosophy.

At the same time, as I said, this dissertation is an investigation into Husserl's philosophy. With a philosopher who developed one of history's most spectacular systems of thought accompanied by baroque style and a-typical jargon, writing for a broader audience certainly is a delicate matter. Just as any other Husserl scholar working on inter-philosophical (it sounds bad, but that is what it is) matters, I have tried to find a balance between my desire to dwell on the intricate details of Husserl's thinking and a conviction of the importance to make his philosophy more accessible. Whether I succeeded in doing this is of course up to the reader to decide. I could certainly have produced many more words in many places, yet I do not feel I have had to compromise too much on Husserl's thought generally. Indeed, I would like to think this dissertation could perhaps even present somewhat of an introduction to his thinking as such – although I would take content if readers find it to reflect something of its true spirit.

*Some Basics about the Conceptualism-Debate*

Let me turn more concretely to what this dissertation is about. The central philosophical dispute I seek to analyze is the so-called conceptualism-debate. Generally construed, the debate falls in the traditional research field called the philosophy of perception. It is thus a debate about the nature of perception. More specifically, it is about the question how to characterize the contents of perceptual experience. The exact meaning of the term 'content' can vary between philosophers depending on their broader views and approach. It may point simply to *what* is represented, or additionally to *how* it is represented, or more broadly still to the whole perceptual structure.

To be sure, one can ask various kinds of philosophical questions with regard to perception and its contents. In this dissertation, however, only one such question is at stake. That question is whether the contents of perceptual experience are conceptual or not. Today, those who think perception has exclusively conceptual content are called conceptualists. Philosophers defending non-conceptual content – although usually besides conceptual content – are referred to as non-conceptualists.

Conceptualism is primarily a theory about the contents of perception in the light of their relation to reason. Put differently, it deals foremost with questions regarding the perception-thought relation, rather than with perception's empirical structure as the natural sciences study it. Within the larger field of epistemology, conceptualism is only one theory, and there are certainly others that could likewise have served as a topic for a dissertation on Husserl. However, part of what made me decide to focus on conceptualism is its particular aptness for comparison to Husserl's philosophy. Among its many alternatives, conceptualism stands out for taking experience as its main focal point. Regardless of how one judges its phenomenological accuracy or the philosophical nature of the questions that fuel its inception, conceptualism is affiliated to phenomenology as a theory of experience. In this respect it is, although one might not think of it as *the* most obvious choice, certainly a good candidate for anyone seeking to revive interest in Husserl's philosophy outside the familiar boundaries, as is indeed part of this work's motivation.

Many philosophers, including myself, have tried to force structure onto the rather messy debate about conceptual content. The more I advanced with this research project, the less comfortable I felt with that strategy. This is not to say I completely abandoned the distinctions I introduce in this dissertation and

elsewhere. It became, however, increasingly clear to me that it is not possible to capture the essence of conceptualism or of each of its criticisms by means of a few distinctions. As I have come to view it, one must consider the whole system of thought of a philosopher to understand what conceptualism could mean therein. The general absence of this broader scope in contemporary discussions marks, to my understanding, a significant lacuna. While this does not make the use of clear and simple distinctions redundant, it should cast doubt on whether they alone could suffice to capture the heart of any conceptualist thesis as anyone ever defended it.

Before entering into the bigger philosophical pictures characterizing the debate, let me briefly lay out some of the more basic notions I develop and employ in this dissertation. Having considered (and discarded) dozens of terminological distinctions to try and capture various positions philosophers endorse, I finally decided to stick with two simple divides of my own. First, within the class of conceptualists, I introduce a distinction between *weak* and *full conceptualism*. On this suggestion, weak conceptualism is the view that the contents of perception are open to rational scrutiny and can provide epistemic warrant. The contents of perception are, as McDowell – one of the main defenders of conceptualism – would say, part of the space of (responsiveness to) reasons. Full conceptualism, on the other hand, while agreeing with this, specifies that this is so because conceptual or intellectual capacities are operative in experience. There is, to be sure, a third possible position, according to which the contents of perception simply *are* concepts. This view, however, which can be labeled *hard conceptualism,* appears to be a strawman criticized by some but defended by none.

Second, this time with regard to the two larger camps of conceptualists and non-conceptualists, I introduce a distinction which can be loosely employed between *descriptive* and *epistemic approaches* to perceptual content. I make this distinction mostly to point out different motives philosophers may have to posit or reject non-conceptual content. Whereas conceptualists (who reject non-conceptual content) are generally concerned with questions traditionally belonging to the field of epistemology, non-conceptualists tend to derive their arguments mostly from psychological or phenomenological descriptions of perceptual experience. In short, the distinction between descriptive and epistemic approaches helps accommodate the idea that both camps sometimes talk past each other, because they take different interests in the nature of perception.

With these somewhat dry terminological distinctions in place, now is a good time to turn to the philosophers around whom the debate revolves. Since many

of the chapters go into considerable technical detail, I gladly use this opportunity to emphasize the broader themes at play there, saving finer discussions for later.

*Conceptualism: Some Remarks on Kant, McDowell, and Husserl*

Very early on in this project I made the decision to take Kant (1724-1804) and McDowell (1942-) as main representatives of the conceptualist doctrine. Although the time span between them seems at first rather long, their systematic comparison has proven, I think, quite fruitful, and it is a choice I have not come to favor any less after completing this research. Although there are some other notable figures, I still think one can give expression to the most important tenets of conceptualism through these two philosophers (and the existing interpretations of and the arguments against them). In what follows, I shall briefly expound on the motivation for focusing on these two thinkers further, and by doing so give some more flesh to the idea of conceptualism about perception.

Kant is a particularly interesting figure in the present context not only for his frequently asserted status as the first conceptualist in modern philosophy. Equally important is the fact of his close philosophical affiliation with both McDowell (who praises Kant's theory) and Husserl. Kant takes a central spot in the tradition of modern philosophy, which is characterized through Descartes as having consciousness as one of its focal points. It is only through Kant, however, that the idea of a pure science of consciousness is conceived. More exactly, the science of consciousness at stake is a science of science itself, that is: it is a fundamental epistemology in the form of a theory of knowing experience. This idea of a theory of knowledge through analysis of the *a priori* elements of experience is the essence of the tradition of transcendental philosophy which Kant instituted, and which Husserl too considered himself a part of.

To put it crudely, conceptualism enters into the picture of Kant's transcendental philosophy as a reply to skepticism. On Kant's view, the fundamental principles of science are determined by the basic ordering capacities of our thought and intuition. These capacities furthermore operate onto our experience and our capacity to perceive. As a result, we cannot but perceive the world in accordance with those fundamental ways in which the sciences objectively describe it. Kant thinks this allows him to ensure that objective knowledge has a solid foundation which resists skepticism, namely in the *a priori* conceptual and intuitional structures of consciousness.

While Kant can perhaps be considered the first conceptualist of some kind or other, it is McDowell's work which made conceptualism a concern for philosophers today. If we follow his word, conceptualism is best regarded a theory about perception's role in providing belief warrant. Here, ascribing conceptual content to perception is supposed to explain how it can be a part of the 'space of reasons', while at the same time avoiding a certain naturalistic fallacy whereby sense data provide us a reassuring foothold in external reality (the 'myth of the given'). Put differently, by saying that perception has conceptual content, McDowell thinks we can maintain thought's bearing on the world and thus avoid its 'frictionless spinning in a void' (McDowell 1996, 11), while simultaneously sidestepping the sort of empirical foundationalism he and many others deem unacceptable.

Ultimately, McDowell's conceptualism is not only a theory of experience, its contents, and its function as a tribunal to which thought testifies, but equally a philosophical view of man's place in reality. This bigger picture is rooted in a naturalism which does not want to compromise the autonomy of human reason. While for McDowell sensory capacities are principally natural occurrences belonging to the regions of scientific inquiry, he submits that we are also compelled to think of our actions and beliefs as responsive to reasons which are not mere facts bound by natural law. For McDowell, conceptualism about the contents of experience fits within a larger program of ascribing a *sui generis* intelligibility to the space of reasons, without suggesting it floats over and above nature.

Certainly this short survey of Kant and McDowell cannot suffice as a proper comparison. It does indicate, however, that in spite of a more superficial similarity in terms of some role ascribed to conceptual operations in perception, conceptualism serves very different ends and is motivated uniquely within their respective philosophies. As a result, conceptualism must in fact mean something very different to both of them. Rather than taking there to be one conceptualist thesis espoused by several philosophers, it is thus better to think of a conceptualism endorsed by Kant and another one by McDowell. To abstract from the bigger frameworks in which these thinkers develop their conceptualist views is to miss what they are all about. Critics of conceptualism frequently overlook such matters, and occasionally end up advocating forms of non-conceptual content that have little or no bearing on the central issues at stake for conceptualists.

Conceptualism thus means something quite different for McDowell than for

Kant. Yet in spite of such differences, it is not entirely unjust to say that today's paradigm for conceptualism (although not necessarily for non-conceptual content) is predominantly a Kantian one. This is not only due to the great variety of discussions on Kant's conceptualism, but equally to McDowell, whose conceptualism accepts at least certain basic Kantian presuppositions, such as a distinction between a natural sensibility and a spontaneous understanding. Thus considered, it would of course be of the greatest interest to look at conceptualism and the philosophical problems that fuel it from an altogether different point of view – not only to discover some other way to answer the question, but also to see what would happen to the very question itself.

This brings me to Husserl and the question of the role of concepts in perception in his philosophy. My motivation for involving Husserl in the debate is precisely that it may offer the right tools to put the philosophical worries that invigorate conceptualism in its different forms in a new light. Although there is now some debate as to whether Husserl is best regarded a conceptualist or not, this dissertation presents the first study encompassing the full scope of Husserl's philosophy regarding this matter, and moreover should stand out for taking the question itself as seriously as the answer. Put differently, my concerns here are not restricted to Husserl's conceptualism or the forms of non-conceptual content he subscribes to. Of still greater interest is what we can learn from Husserl with regard to understanding the very reasons that make conceptualism attractive to some philosophers.

It is useful to briefly introduce Husserl's way to philosophy along general lines here, in order to illustrate how it differs from Kant's and McDowell's. Husserl is, of course, famous as the founder of a discipline called phenomenology. This is, very briefly put, a science of pure experience. According to Husserl, it is based on a specific observing attitude which excludes empirical thinking in order to describe the structures of consciousness purely in terms of its own being (its *sui generis* 'appearance-reality' rather than its empirical reality, to use the more familiar Searlean terms). In his mature works, this systematic study of pure consciousness is further specified by Husserl as a transcendental science. In the spirit of an all-encompassing transcendental idealism, the world is now taken to be inconceivable but as correlate of consciousness. The phenomenological analyses of the latter should thereby gain the status of contributing to a *prima philosophia* which alone can give the final story about how we know the world and even how it comes to be there for us.

Husserl, then, saw phenomenology not solely as a science of experience, but

as a foundational science in the Kantian sense, which explicates the final sense of things through pure description of their necessary structures of appearing. Although set up as a systematic, collaborative science, Husserl's philosophy is beyond doubt eccentric and its results are rarely considered easily accessible. This is at least partially due to the fact that Husserl bases his philosophy on an unprecedentedly radical freedom from prejudice, which includes the suspension of all natural thinking. As a consequence of this, Husserl cannot be considered an empirical or naturalist thinker as both McDowell and Kant ultimately are in some sense or other. His philosophy does not, for instance, entitle sensible experience as the one and only tribunal our thoughts must testify to or as supposed gateway to external reality. Already in *Logical Investigations* (1900-1901), Husserl criticizes Kant's privileging of sensible intuition in Kant's account of cognition as a cooperation of sensibility and understanding, and posits his own alternative based on the fulfillment of empty acts by full ones.

Over the course of this dissertation, Husserl's radical suspension of natural thinking becomes increasingly important for coming to terms with the idea of conceptualism within his philosophy. This is not in the least due to the fact that, on the reading put forward, conceptualism for Kant and McDowell seems to rely on certain naturalistic motives. For one, Kant's transcendental philosophy – as he himself admits – departs from an acceptance of synthetic *a priori* cognitions in mathematics and natural science. Moreover, Kant's transcendental efforts are limited to exposing the most universal forms of cognition that remain after abstracting from all experiential content. This methodological constraint determines the form of Kant's conceptualism, as conceptualism here entails precisely the determination of perception through only those universal forms of thought, in order to thereby explain the ostensible fact of our synthetic *a priori* cognitions. McDowell's naturalism, on the other hand, shows up among others in his Aristotelean notion of the human being as a rational animal, that is, first of all a *natural* creature, albeit one with a *sui generis* rationality. His conceptualism subsequently ties into this naturalist philosophy, as an alternative way to conceive of the relation between reason and natural reality.

To be sure, there is a sense in which Husserl too responds to scientific concerns of his day, especially – like Kant – to skepticism, which Husserl attacks in his critiques of psychologism and later of philosophical naturalism and *Weltanschauungsphilosophie*. But unlike Kant's, Husserl's philosophy is purposively set up to exclude any external motives *vis-à-vis* the description of pure consciousness. This includes all natural thinking, theoretical construction, and

even logical argumentation. Furthermore, Husserl considers this pure phenomenological study – the entirely unprejudiced description of the way things show themselves – the only way to philosophy. Genuine philosophy can only be done if it is assigned its own true scope, which belongs to it not arbitrarily but by its very own essence, and whose bounds may not be transgressed by letting in the methods and motives of natural thinking. Philosophy here is a very precisely delineated scientific discipline. The constant interference of external motives in philosophy is, for Husserl, the principle cause of the embarrassing recurrence of the same philosophical trends for so many centuries, yielding no lasting validities as in the flourishing sciences.

Philosophy, then, as Husserl has it, must depart from the unbiased description of pure consciousness. Since even the real existence of the natural world is a kind of assumption (*a posteriori* known), true philosophy can never be natural philosophy. Therefore, as I purport to show, for reasons inherent to the very set-up of Husserl's philosophy, some of the central concerns the conceptualist theory is supposed to speak to are in fact not shared by Husserl. They stem from a natural thinking from which Husserl deliberately distanced his own thought and whose internal consistency he continuously sought to disprove.

To my mind, such bigger differences between these three philosophers, here obviously only described in the broadest of brushstrokes, are crucial to the question of the role of concepts in perception in their works. Importantly, they allow us to better appreciate the contexts within which Kant and McDowell posit their forms of conceptualism. As I see it, for both of them reasons for endorsing conceptualism can be traced to a dominant natural thinking. Kant's conceptualism solves an intricate puzzle of the unconditional validity of principles of objective knowledge; McDowell's conceptualism a different puzzle involving questions of our perceptual responsiveness to reasons and the relation between reason and nature. For both, then, ascribing conceptual content to perception fits within larger philosophical programs that are quite remote from Husserl's 'unnatural' philosophy.

Since Husserl does not allow a natural or constructive-theoretical thinking within his philosophy, it seems possible that the need for a conceptualist theory of perception may not arise at all in his thinking – at least not as a reply satisfying some theoretical demand imposed upon it. Because of this, it can indeed not be guaranteed that by the end of this dissertation we should find a clear-cut answer as to the question whether Husserl is a conceptualist. Of course this does not in the least make asking the question less valuable. To the contrary, this dissertation

departs from the idea that Husserl might just offer the right tools to uncover some of the hidden presuppositions that make conceptualism an attractive option to other philosophers.

At the same time, by revealing reasons why conceptualism is or is not attractive within different philosophical frameworks the final story about perception's conceptual content has not yet been told. Even from a complete lack of incentives to posit a conceptualist theory an outright rejection of the central conceptualist idea – that concepts inform perception – does not necessarily follow. It is possible that aspects of the conceptualist theory are phenomenologically accurate from Husserl's viewpoint, regardless of whether the problem-solving capacities Kant and McDowell ascribe to it would hold any water. Such concerns – as well as those regarding non-conceptual content – will also be dealt with extensively in this dissertation.

These brief reflections hopefully make clear some good reasons for taking interest in Husserl's philosophy when it comes to debates about conceptualism. In part, also, they served to draw attention to the complexity of the philosophical motivations of conceptualists such as Kant and McDowell, which still frequently remain hidden beneath the surface of today's more narrowly focused debates about (non-)conceptual content.

### *A Brief Overview, Chapter by Chapter*

With regard to Kant in *Chapter 1*, I focus mostly on the first *Critique* – both versions, as is commonly done – but likewise involve his pre-critical writings to further illuminate the source of his mature views. My main aim in this first chapter is to analyze Kant's theory of perception as one of two (besides McDowell's) chief representatives of conceptualism. I further contrast my own reading of Kant's position with contemporary discussions on this matter.

Regarding McDowell in *Chapter 2*, references to many of his works are included, although a principal emphasis lies on his most important work *Mind and World*. Besides discussing McDowell's views on the role of conceptual capacities in experience, I also offer an interpretation of his theory of *Bildung* and of spaces of reasons and nature. The second chapter offers a comprehensive overview of contemporary arguments for non-conceptual content, and assesses whether they pose problems for McDowell's conceptualism.

This brings me to Husserl, to whom the main part of this dissertation (*Chapter 3* to *7*) is devoted. There are roughly three ways from which I consider

conceptualism about perception in Husserl's philosophy. These are, although differing in method, potency, and result, not distinct from each other – let alone outright incompatible. The first way, central to *Chapter 3,* focuses on Husserl's fifth and sixth book of *Logical Investigations*. This work is of interest here primarily because of its account of intentionality, the role of non-conceptual sensations therein, and perhaps most of all because of its theory of epistemic justification. Perhaps most interestingly, Husserl's account resists the specification of justification as an interplay between sensibility and understanding as Kant has it, or as a process exclusively within a space of concepts as McDowell suggests. Instead, I argue, Husserl re-thinks the structure of belief justification in terms of the 'fullness' certain types of intentional acts can bring to other types of 'empty' intentional acts. This account, on my reading, although it does not teach us much regarding the conceptual determination of perception, involves a sustained critique of core of tenets of Kantian epistemology which McDowell also abides by.

The second way, central to *Chapter 4* and *5,* focuses on Husserl's mature transcendental philosophy. First, in the fourth chapter*,* which deals mostly with *Ideas I* (and to a lesser extent *Ideas II*)*,* I discuss Husserl's adapted theory of intentionality, now specified in terms of ego, hyle, noesis, and noema. In discussing this model, I draw some interesting comparisons between it and contemporary defenders of non-conceptual content. Also, I here consider whether non-conceptual content could still be epistemically efficacious within Husserl's phenomenological setup – something denied on McDowell's picture – and further whether Husserl could be said to support the core of the weak conceptualist thesis.

In the fifth chapter, which draws heavily on many posthumously published manuscripts, I set out to address Husserl's views on the scope and nature of philosophy itself. It is thus a kind of meta-philosophical chapter, which explains the way Husserl thinks philosophical questions concerning the perception-thought relation should be answered and in what ways they should not. I subsequently contrast this picture to Kant's transcendental philosophy and to McDowell's thinking, and argue that Husserl opposes McDowell on a number of crucial points which affect how the question of conceptualism ought to be understood within Husserl's philosophy.

Lastly, *Chapter 6* and *7* discuss the third way through Husserl's so-called genetic phenomenology. Here I argue that Husserl deeply appreciated the different ways in which our passive perceptions and copings are always already

embedded in larger conceptual structures. Husserl, indeed, acknowledges the pervasive influence of rational capacities on operations of sensibility. At the same time, his genetic phenomenology is characterized precisely by the attempt to clarify the 'genesis' of reason out of passive, 'pre-predicative' consciousness. In other words, Husserl sought to show how our pre-rational experience in a certain sense conditions and determines the form of our understanding. This very enterprise, I argue, not only contradicts the core of the conceptualist thesis, but is furthermore unthinkable (albeit for different reasons) within the conceptual frameworks of Kant and McDowell. Husserl's philosophy, then, is the only one of these which claims to be able to offer a fundamental clarification of reason which truly goes beyond reason itself.

Of the final two chapters, *Chapter 6* contains the most detailed analyses of Husserl's views on perceptual experience and how it conditions rationality. Here, I argue among others that Husserl distinguishes between various levels of perceptual engagement, and I discuss whether they must necessarily be conceptually or even intentionally structured. I also show how perception for Husserl is inherently connected to capacities for movement, and discuss the roles bodily action, horizons, and goal-directedness play in the perceptual process.

Last but not least, *Chapter* 7 discusses the phenomenology of judgment as well as Husserl's views on the conceptual determination of perceptual experience. These analyses on so-called 'habit' constitute a kind of phenomenological elucidation of *Bildung* as McDowell speaks of it. Through it, a markedly more holistic picture of the perception-judgment relation is finally arrived at. By analyzing consciousness's development through accumulations of habits, I argue that Husserl discovers the *mutually* founding relations between perception and reason. This indicates Husserl's increasingly holistic understanding of world-experience, where no act can be thoroughly understood without drawing on the whole of conscious life, including its very own past. At the same time, however, I argue that epistemic justification for Husserl remains to be understood in direct intuitional terms, that is, as the immediate evidence of a thing giving itself clearly and with fullness – and not in terms of hermeneutics or coherence within some larger system.

### *Some Remarks on Literature Use*

Before proceeding to the first chapter, I would gladly use this opportunity to remark on my choice of literature specifically regarding Husserl's oeuvre.

Husserl's collection of works is rather vast; it encompasses over forty volumes which contain Husserl's finished and near to finished works as well as lecture notes and selected materials from his *Nachlass*. There exist, of course, different traditions of interpreting Husserl. Frequently, these traditions of interpretation correlate with a focus on certain works and an exclusion of others. There is, to give one example, a lively tradition of American west coast readers, which puts a strong emphasis on earlier writings, while tending to ignore the alleged extravagancies of the later transcendental phase.

To the extent time and ability allowed me, I have tried to avoid being overly selective regarding Husserl's oeuvre. Instead, I have aimed at presenting an honest picture of the Husserl we now have access to. This includes not only the meager selection of works published during his lifetime, but also various manuscripts insofar as I deemed them relevant to the aims of this investigation. The extensive use of less known works proved particularly (but not exclusively) fruitful in the dazzling discussions of Husserl's perspective on the task and scope of transcendental philosophy in *Chapter 5* and also in discussing his genetic phenomenology in *Chapter 6* and *7*. I have used my own translations in quoting from these works.

*Published Material*

Lastly, I should probably mention that earlier versions of some parts of this research have been or will soon be published at various places. These include original articles in *Canadian Journal of Philosophy, The Southern Journal of Philosophy, International Journal of Philosophical Studies, Diametros, Meta: Research in Hermeneutics, Phenomenology, and Practical Philosophy* (2x), *Horizon: Studies in Phenomenology, Kant Studies Online,* the Springer-series *Contributions to Phenomenology,* and a chapter in a volume of *De Gruyter*. Some parts also figure in reviews published in *Metodo: International Studies in Phenomenology and Philosophy* (2x), *Phenomenological Reviews,* and *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*.

# Chapter 1. Kant and the Conceptualism Debate

*Chapter Summary*
Especially since the appearance of McDowell's *Mind and World* in 1994, Kant is often viewed as the first proponent of conceptualism – the thesis that perceptual experiences have conceptual content. In this first introductory chapter I deal with the problem of characterizing the contents of experience in Kant's transcendental philosophy, a topic widely debated today. I start out discussing Kant's early views on space in connection to Leibniz's relational doctrine, where Kant first develops a notion of non-conceptual intuitional content. I then examine the extent to which this differs from important parts of the first *Critique*. Apart from offering an introduction to the Kantian side of contemporary debates about conceptualism, I argue that the conflict in Kant's work is only apparent and that a specific form of conceptualism applies to Kant.

## 1.1. On Appearances and Concepts

### *1.1.1. Introduction and Overview of the Chapter*

The first two chapters of this work serve to introduce the philosophical problems that will occupy me throughout all five chapters on Husserl.[1] I approach these problems here broadly from three different angles. The first is Kant's transcendental philosophy[2], which I deal with in this chapter. The second is McDowell's conceptualist theory and the third contemporary arguments for non-conceptual content, both of which I discuss in the following chapter.

There are several good reasons for starting this work with a discussion of Kant's philosophy. The first is that the projects which Kant and Husserl ventured are closely related both in terms of aims as well as philosophical method. Although Kant is not a phenomenologist, both philosophers are part of a

[1] A much earlier version of this chapter has been published in *Kant Studies Online* by the title 'Why Kant is a non-conceptualist but is better regarded a conceptualist', see: Van Mazijk (2014d). I also used this chapter in my reading of Kant in an article published in *Diametros* named 'Kant, Husserl, McDowell: the non-conceptual in experience', see: Van Mazijk (2014a).

[2] References to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* are given with standard abbreviations CPR followed by standard references to the first and second editions: A and B. This chapter addresses Kant's views on perception systematically; it does not include distinct treatments of the two editions of the first *Critique*.

tradition of German transcendental philosophy[3], and Husserl frequently acknowledges strong affinities between his own thinking and Kant's.[4] A second reason is that since the publication of McDowell's *Mind and World* in 1994, Kant is often regarded as the earliest proponent of conceptualism. This suggestion has effectively reinvigorated studies about Kant's account of the role of concepts in perception – which is what I discuss in this chapter.

The debate about conceptualism is commonly regarded to concern the role of concepts in experience. According to Bermúdez's early and still popular definition, a non-conceptual content is one that represents the world without demanding that its bearer should possess the concepts required to specify that content (even though s/he may in fact possess them) (Bermúdez 1994, 403). By the same rule, a conceptual content would be one the subject cannot have without possessing concepts that could specify the content. In other words, conceptualism would be the doctrine that the contents of experience could not be the way they are without a subject possessing the relevant concepts required to explicate those contents in a judgment.

Bermúdez's definition is, however, one among very many. Moreover, most non-conceptualists (Bermúdez included) are interested in perception for different reasons than conceptualists. I continue to explore various alternative takes on the division between both camps in *Chapter 2*. In this chapter, conceptualism does not so much refer to a possession condition as Bermúdez's thesis specifies, but to the role concepts play in bringing perception about.

The aims of this first chapter are broadly threefold: (i) to analyze Kant's theory of perception as one of two (besides McDowell's) of today's main representatives of conceptualism, (ii) to offer a discussion of contemporary interpretations of Kant's views on this matter, and (iii) to develop my own reading of Kant's position. In the first part of this chapter, I first explain how Kant came to conceive of human experience as consisting of two distinct sources: sensibility and understanding. I subsequently address why Kant regarded the products of sensibility – called intuitions – non-conceptual, for which I take some of his pre-critical writings into account. I then discuss parts of the Transcendental Deduction from the first *Critique*, which appear to negate Kant's

[3] Transcendental philosophy can be understood generally as the turn to consciousness to investigate the ultimate conditions of possibility of meaning, knowledge, and reality. I discuss Husserl's understanding of transcendental philosophy in greater detail in *Chapter 5*.

[4] See especially Kern (1964, 3-50) for a historical assessment of Husserl's engagements with Kant's writings.

earlier claims about the distinctness of the faculty of sensibility and the intuitions it produces. The resulting tension is the problem central to debates about Kantian conceptualism.

In the second part, I deal with contemporary interpretations of this problem. I here claim that recent attempts to read Kant as a non-conceptualist are generally unconvincing, as their suggestions cannot be squared with the conceptualism of the Transcendental Deduction. By drawing on Kant's ideas about spatiotemporal orientation, I argue that a notion of an extra-conceptual perspectival *point of view* can sufficiently account for Kant's arguments for a *sui generis* sensibility, while also satisfying his conceptualist theory of perception in the Transcendental Deduction. Since the latter is a much weightier proposal and one specifically about the synthetic contents of perception, Kant is still best regarded as upholding a conceptualist theory of perception.

### *1.1.2. The Distinction Between Sensibility and Understanding*

One of the principal contributions Kant makes to philosophy is captured by his idea that knowledge must consist of the combination of appearances (or more specifically intuitions, as that in the appearance which has object-reference) and concepts. Appearances, on Kant's picture, are given to us through the faculty of sensibility. Concepts, on the other hand, originate in the faculty of understanding.[5] These tasks of producing appearances and concepts, Kant notes, cannot be exchanged between these two faculties: 'the understanding is not capable of intuiting anything and the senses are not capable of thinking anything' (CPR A51/B75). If it were not for our sensibility, 'no object would be given to us', whereas without a faculty of understanding, 'none would be thought'.

Our sensibility, on Kant's picture, produces appearances as a result of an unknowable impact reality has onto our senses.[6] These appearances, insofar as they are structured by the pure forms of our sensibility (space and time), are representations. Appearances are, furthermore, characterized as immediate and singular representations (CPR A109); they represent objects without the mediations of thought or judgment. A concept, on the other hand, is a general

[5] A third faculty, that of reason, can be understood as a faculty of inference. Its importance lies primarily in the Dialectic of the first *Critique*, which I shall not go into here.

[6] There is considerable debate about the status of the *Ding an sich* in Kant's philosophy and how it bears on his idealist commitments. I shall bypass such questions here, but see especially Braver (2007, 33-58), Stang (2016), and Van Mazijk (2018) for recent discussions.

and mediate representation; a 'one over many'. A concept of or a proposition about an object is therefore always a representation of a representation – whether of appearances (singular representations), of other concepts or propositions (general representations), or both.

So construed, we have two fundamental types of representation, appearance and concept, produced by two heterogeneous sources, the combination of which alone gives us knowledge. But things soon turn out to be more complicated than this. Within Kant's picture, concepts are peculiarly assigned a double role. First, they have an *analytic* function for us. We make use of this analytic function when we form judgments about things – for instance in judging that all swans are white or that every event must have a cause. Second, and considerably more originally, Kant claims that concepts have a *synthetic* function. This means that they function as rules for the synthesis of representations – not just our conceptual representations, but likewise 'everything that may ever come before our senses' (CPR B160).

So while appearances were at first said to be the exclusive concern of our sensibility, it now seems that they are not brought forth exclusively by that faculty after all. In fact, large parts of the first *Critique* suggest that sensibility by itself cannot provide us any appearance whatsoever. Apart from its pure function of furnishing experiences with the necessary forms of space and time, the faculty of sensibility only functions as the receiver of unstructured manifolds of sensations. To actually see an object, by contrast, presupposes synthesis: the manifold of sensations must first be brought together into a single representation. Given that concepts – specifically *pure concepts* – are said to be the rules for such synthesis, no appearance can be said to be possible without the synthetic utilization of concepts of understanding.

Kant, then, although first suggesting that sensibility and understanding have distinct tasks which cannot be exchanged, and that these tasks consist in the generation of two distinct elements of cognition, later appears to correct this view. To perceive already presupposes having concepts which guide the synthesis of the manifold of sensations into perceptual appearances. To be sure, this does not imply that perception would be a form of judgment. The analytic function of concepts is no requisite for acquiring perceptual appearances; only the synthetic function is. It is the tension between these two claims – that intuitions originate from a distinct faculty of sensibility and that they are the result of syntheses of understanding – which constitutes the core of today's debate about Kantian non-conceptualism.

In the next section, I first explore in more detail why Kant distinguished between sensibility and understanding and why he insisted on the non-conceptual (namely intuitional) nature of the pure forms space and time. This should make clear what reasons there are for considering perceptual appearance as a (possibly) non-conceptual (not guided by concepts) achievement. In the section after that, I turn to Kant's elusive account of synthesis, where we find the best evidence for the necessary role of concepts in perception.

### *1.1.3. Why Intuition is Non-Conceptual*

Already in his 1755 work *New Elucidation of the First Principles of Metaphysical Cognition*, Kant takes note of the insufficiency of conceptual connections alone in order to form true judgments about the existence of things (Kant 1992a, also Guyer 2005). Kant here develops an argument to criticize rationalist philosophers (Descartes, Leibniz, among many) seeking to prove the existence of God. Simply put, Kant suggests that the rationalist approach to construct valid propositions about existing things on an exclusively conceptual basis is unsound. Consider the following fragment:

> Form for yourself the concept of some being or other in which there is a totality of reality. It must be conceded that, given this concept, existence also has to be attributed to this being. But if all those realities are only conceived as united together, then the existence of that being is also only an existence of ideas (Kant 1992a, 15)

Kant's point is that just thinking about an object as existing cannot suffice to establish anything about the existence of that object. Hume had in point of fact developed a similar claim about two decades earlier. According to him, analytic judgments do not yield empirically valid propositions. Statements are either about ideas – in which case their validity is necessary – or they are about the world – in which case their validity is not absolute. Hence a truth claim about the existence of god based on ideas alone is invalid.

In the 1755 text, Kant did not exploit his Humean line of thought by separating two distinct faculties, the cooperation of which alone could yield knowledge. In 1768 (see Kant 1992b), still thirteen years prior to the publication of the first *Critique*, Kant is again compelled to acknowledge an element of experience operating besides the intellect. This time, the argument fits ongoing debates on the nature of space between Clarke's absolutist and Leibniz's

relational account.[7]

On the standard absolutist view of the time, the motion of objects has to be understood in relation to a background of absolute space which exists independently of objects. Against this, Leibniz's theory makes space wholly dependent upon relations that obtain between objects. Space, on Leibniz view, is something like a supervenient property of the relations between objects, rather than existing for itself. In short, Kant wants to show that certain properties of objects cannot be accounted for in terms of relations alone. His argument for this draws on so-called 'incongruent counterparts'. To strengthen the absolutist account – which Kant would ultimately trade again for a concept of ideal space in his transcendental philosophy – the argument draws on the necessity of an extra-conceptual component of our experiences of objects.

Kant's basic line of reasoning goes something like this. Imagine that God created a three-dimensional universe and subsequently went on to install a left and a right hand in it that are otherwise identical in every respect. Let us further imagine that there are no observers as of yet in this universe. Given these conditions, Kant asserts next, it would be impossible to determine which hand is left and which one is right. The point is that no investigation which departs exclusively from mathematical or conceptual considerations could distinguish left from right. This is because left and right are relative determinations. The ability to distinguish left from right demands something strictly extra-conceptual – namely an observer's perspectival point of view.

Kant's point is that connections between points in space alone do not allow for differentiating between objects that are incongruent counterparts, that is, for objects that are incongruent but identical *qua* formal spatial relations. The relational account, then, which only considers the various (conceptual) relations between different points in space, must be unable to decide which of the hands is left and which is right.

Congruent counterpart

Incongruent counterpart

In the above figure (in two-dimensional space) the left two objects can be made to fit onto each other by rotation. Although counterparts, Kant would say we can assess them adequately in terms of spatial relations. The two objects on the right,

[7] See also Earman (1991) and Janiak (2012) for introductions to this debate.

however, cannot be made to fit each other through rotation (in two-dimensional space). They differ in a way which transcends the sole use of geometrical conceptualization. The conclusion is twofold. First, incongruent counterparts cannot be completely accounted for on a relational account of space. Second, given that we do recognize differences between incongruent counterparts, some part of our empirical cognition of objects must depend on an extra-conceptual capacity. Two years later, in 1770, Kant goes one step further in explicating the consequences of his argument in terms of a capacity called intuition.

The importance of a second constitutive element of experience besides the intellect thus pressed upon Kant from early in his career onwards; first through the refutation of analytic arguments for God's existence and later through his views on space. His position in these discussions helped shape the first *Critique,* especially the Transcendental Aesthetic (which is on intuitions and the faculty of sensibility).

This finally brings us to Kant's account of sensibility in the first *Critique.* As noted already, Kant here separates two distinct sources of cognition: sensibility and understanding, each of which has its own task, namely the bringing forth of intuitions and concepts respectively.[8] Kant also claims that each source contains its necessary *pure* forms. In case of the faculty of sensibility, these are the forms space and time. By ascribing to such pure forms of our sensibility, Kant (a) accepts some form of (epistemological) idealism[9], for we cannot sensibly experience the world apart from how it must be given to us *a priori*, and (b) thinks he effectively overturns Humean skepticism, since we can formulate propositions about space and time with absolute validity.

Let me pursue a slightly more specific reading of Kant's use of the adjectives *a priori* and transcendental here.[10] For Kant, *a priori* in general refers to cognitions

[8] Kant does not, in contrast with his account of the pure forms of intuition and of thought, provide any (transcendental) arguments for this fundamental distinction. He appears to believe that it cannot be explained any further (CPR B145-146).

[9] '[Pure] representation in itself does not produce its object in so far as *existence* is concerned […]. None the less the representation is *a priori* determinant of the object, if it be the case that only through the representation is it possible to *know* anything *as an object*' (CPR A92/B125). See also Guyer and Horstmann (2015) for more on Kant's epistemological idealism.

[10] See also Förster (2012) and Allison (2015) for their analyses of how Kant uses the term transcendental in the first *Critique,* and Nenon (2008) for an introductory discussion of some commonalities and differences between Kant's and Husserl's approach to transcendental philosophy.

'that occur absolutely independently of all experience' (CPR B2-3).[11] This includes propositions in pure mathematics and natural science. Kant admits, however, of *a priori* judgments having experientially derived constituents, as in 'every alteration has a cause', where the concept of alteration is derived from experience (CPR B3). For this reason, Kant subsequently contrasts this concept of *a priori* cognition to a concept of *pure a priori* cognition, which are said to contain absolutely nothing that belongs to sensation (CPR A20/B34).

The pure forms of experience dealt with in Kant's transcendental philosophy are of this latter kind. Because they contain nothing that belongs to concrete (*a posteriori*) experiential content, they are only the most general *forms* of our sensibility and understanding, discoverable by abstracting completely from all concrete experiential content (CPR A20-21/B35, A22/B36, A70/B95, A95-96). So, for instance, regarding sensibility, one can 'separate from the representation of a body that which the understanding thinks about it […] as well as that which belongs to sensation, such as impenetrability, hardness, color, etc.' (CPR A21/B35). After this process, the *form* of space still remains, which is therefore a pure form of experience, in this case of our sensibility.

Apart from thus concerning only the most abstract forms, Kant's transcendental philosophy focuses exclusively on the conditions of possibility of our cognition of objects in general: 'not every cognition must be called transcendental', but only those that concern 'the possibility of cognition or its use *a priori*' (CPR A56/B80). In other words, the term transcendental applies only to the most general forms of our cognition taken as a whole. This means motion and change, for instance, are not pure forms of experience – because they presuppose empirical things existing in space and time (and are thus further derived from or composed of other forms[12]) – while the synthetic *a priori* propositions in mathematics and natural science are not transcendental because they do not concern the possibility of cognition as such. Although it need not necessarily concern us at this point, Kant's restriction of transcendental inquiry to (i) pure, content-abstract forms which (ii) concern only the possibility of cognition in general significantly determines his transcendental philosophy and ultimately also his conceptualist views. I return to this and to Husserl's diverging ideas about transcendental philosophy especially in *Chapter 5*.

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[11] For a more detailed exposition of the different ways in which Kant uses *a priori,* see especially Anderson (2010).

[12] In Kant's words, the pure concepts of understanding must 'be fundamental and be carefully distinguished from those which are derivative or composite' (CPR A64/B89).

Let me now return to Kant's separation of concepts and intuitions. Although Kant briefly mentions it in the *Prolegomena*, which was published just after the first *Critique,* the latter work contains no reference to the argument based on incongruent counterparts which Kant had developed earlier (although it does reoccur in an essay from 1786, see Kant 1996). As we have seen previously, that argument convincingly revealed that our cognition of things demands positing embodied observers which occupy a spatiotemporal point of orientation relative to the world they take in. Hence the sudden exemption of this argument in the first *Critique* arguably obfuscates Kant's specific motives for positing space and time as *a priori* forms of intuitions rather than as conceptual forms of understanding. This proves it fruitful to look at the pre-critical writings to understand Kant's appeal to an extra-conceptual element of experience.

So much for Kant's views regarding the necessity of space and time as forms of all possible intuition, or still better, as forms of a specifically extra-conceptual faculty of spatiotemporal orientation. Besides its pure function, the faculty of sensibility also operates as the receiver of empirical manifolds of sensations. Without such manifolds of sensations, moreover, space and time would be meaningless – they are, after all, only empty forms. If we consider these sensations prior to the activity of synthesis – to which I turn in the next section – they must be said to be unstructured, i.e. non-conceptual. However, given the shape the pure forms of sensibility and understanding add to experience *a priori,* Kant would have to deem such talk about unstructured sensations nonsensical.

The faculty of sensibility, then, (i) contains pure forms (space and time) which structure all possible perceptions, and (ii) receives unstructured manifolds of sensations. These are, to my mind, the functions everyone can agree on that on Kant's view cannot be taken over by the understanding. Sensibility is therefore *sui generis* at least insofar as space, time, and the receiving of sensations is concerned.

Kant, however, also makes considerably bolder claims with respect to the unique contribution our sensibility makes to experience. As I noted earlier, Kant occasionally suggests that the bringing forth of intuitions – the perceptual takings which represent things immediately and singularly – is also a task performed exclusively by the faculty of sensibility. The function of bringing forth intuitions and concepts is, in each case, restricted to that single source from which they rise, a task which cannot be taken over by the other:

Objects are therefore given to us by means of sensibility, and *it alone affords us intuitions*; but they are thought through the understanding, and *from it arise concepts*

(CPR A19/B33 my italics)

Kant here suggests unequivocally that the human cognitive apparatus has two distinct sources which produce two equally distinct elements of experience, each on their own. Sensibility affords us intuitions (and thereby gives us objects), while understanding gives us concepts (and thereby thoughts). We can refer to this idea of the mutually independent operation of our two stems of experience as the *independency thesis*.

Following Kant's apparent approval of the independency thesis, sensibility must be said to (i) receive manifolds of sensations, to (ii) provide pure forms for the appearances of things (intuitions), and to (iii) afford us the intuitions through which we are in contact with such things. These are, it now seems, the full capacities of *sui generis* sensibility. Whereas the pure forms space and time are necessarily extra-conceptual, as Kant's pre-critical work revealed, it is now additionally suggested that intuition is an entirely non-conceptual (not involving concepts) accomplishment.

To conclude, there are at least two good reasons for considering Kant's account of intuition to involve non-conceptual content (apart from the notion of unstructured sense data). The first derives from his pre-critical work – specifically the argument about incongruent counterparts – the second from the independency thesis specified in the first *Critique*. Both provide support for the idea that our perceptual contact with the world is not necessarily mediated by concepts, but can be an achievement of the faculty of sensibility alone. To be sure, on Kant's account in the first *Critique,* 'experience' *always* requires an interplay of intuitions and concepts, and never just intuitions. But this is because experience in Kant's terminology means (the universal form of) empirical cognition, i.e. of an act of acquiring knowledge, not perception or sense experience – as is today the more commonplace usage of the term experience. Therefore, following the outlines of this section, cognition can be said to require an interplay of intuitions and concepts, while simply intuiting something does not.

### *1.1.4. Why Intuition is Conceptual*

So far I exposed Kant's account of an autonomously operating faculty of sensibility and retrieved some of the motives for it from his pre-critical work. In this section, I look at the Transcendental Analytic, and more specifically the

Transcendental Deduction, where Kant elaborates on the use of concepts and synthesis in perception.

As mentioned already, both sensibility and understanding contain pure forms. For sensibility, these necessary forms are space and time, through which all intuitions are given. For the faculty of understanding, Kant delineates a table of twelve 'categories'[13] – in the present context a different word for pure conceptual forms. These pure concepts are closely tied to the table of judgments which Kant first exposes, in which he outlines the basic ways in which concepts can be related to empirically undetermined objects (see CPR B94), i.e. the fundamental forms of judgment. From here Kant thinks he can deduce the *a priori*, most general structure of our conceptual thought (through a so-called metaphysical exposition). Purely conceptual thought, however, pertains to objects in general – also those that are no possible objects of empirical intuition – and as such its validity *vis-à-vis* experienced reality is not obvious. Kant, then, needs to further show that and how pure concepts apply to experience (first through a so-called transcendental deduction, and later by an account of transcendental schematism[14]), through which their objective validity is ensured.

To be sure, this need would not present itself if the pure concepts of understanding were simply derivable from experience, as is the case with empirical concepts. If, for instance, causality were simply derived from the fact that we time and again see events succeed one another, the whole quest for a transcendental deduction would be superfluous. Kant, of course, believes this Humean picture decisively undermines the absolute necessity of causality (CPR B127-128). If we derive the concept of causality from sense experience, we have no absolute guarantee that a contradicting future experience is excluded. Kant, therefore, as anti-skeptical philosopher, considers this option only to discard it immediately. The pure concepts of understanding have *a priori* validity; they cannot be deduced from perceptions.[15] This means our experience must be

[13] Unity, plurality, totality, reality, negation, limitation, inherence/subsistence, causality/dependence, community, (im)possibility, (non-)existence, necessity/contingency.

[14] Whereas the Transcendental Deduction shows *that* pure concepts apply to all possible experience, the sections on transcendental schematism show *how* they can be applied in acts of judgment. Schematism, then, belongs specifically to the power of judgment. Since my interest goes out to perception here, I will not discuss schematism elaborately in this chapter – although I have offered a comparison of Kant's schematism to Husserl's analysis of *a priori* judgment elsewhere, see: Van Mazijk (2016a).

[15] Longuenesse (2005) offers an illuminating reading of the pure concepts not as innate products but as 'originally acquired' concepts (in contrast to derivatively acquired empirical concepts). On

determined by pure concepts and not the other way around, as that would open the door to skepticism (CPR B166-168, also B127-128). The task of a transcendental deduction of the objective validity of pure concepts (that they apply to all possible and actual experience) which subsequently arises as well as the conceptualist theory of perception developed therein are thus very closely tied to Kant's anti-skeptical views.

To understand the Transcendental Deduction, it is useful to first note that besides an analytic function in judgment, Kant thinks pure concepts also have a synthetic role to play. This synthetic notion of pure concepts is arguably the greatest novelty of Kant's theory of perception apart from the crucial separation of two stems of experience. Concepts, on Kant's account, are not only used in thinking; they also supply the rules for the synthesis through which perception itself comes about. To show how this happens is one of the principal aims of the Transcendental Deduction. For Kant believes that in order for our pure concepts to have objective validity, the objects of intuition must already stand under their rule. Perception, in other words, must take guidance from pure concepts for the latter to have objective validity.

This brings us to Kant's account of synthesis in the Transcendental Deduction. Before advancing his theory, which distinguishes between three forms of synthesis, Kant notes that there are 'three original sources […] of all experience […], namely sense, imagination, and apperception' (CPR A94). This may seem confusing at first sight, given that Kant earlier distinguished three different fundamental sources: sensibility, understanding, and reason. It will later become clear, however, that the 'unity of the apperception in relation to the synthesis of imagination *is* the understanding' (CPR A119). Imagination and apperception can, therefore, be understood as constitutive components of understanding. Of these two components, the imagination is the one responsible for synthesis (CPR B151).

First, Kant notes, there is the so-called synthesis of apprehension (CPR A98-100). This synthesis is responsible for forming a coherent image out of the manifold of sensations which the faculty of sensibility receives. Kant says very little about this synthesis, but it appears he has in mind an activity which pulls

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this reading, the 'categories are *generated* […] only under empirical conditions, but their content is determined independently of these empirical conditions' (Longuenesse 2005, 29 my italics). Although this shows a genesis of the categories with respect to the external conditions under which they may come to life, their content is still entirely independent of all empirical contingencies.

together a synchronic manifold of data (in one moment of time), in order to form an image out of it (CPR B179-181). Although sensibility receives bundles of unstructured sense data, *we* never apprehend them in that way, because the synthesis of apprehension has already distilled an image out of them.

The second synthesis is that of reproduction (CPR A100-102). The synthesis of reproduction is a diachronic synthesis; it is responsible for connecting apprehended images over time. Without connecting previous perceptions to current ones, experience would still be nothing more than a swarm of ever-changing images. For this reason, the synthesis of apprehension and reproduction, Kant notes, are always 'inseparably combined' (CPR A102). So, for instance, in order to perceive an object in motion, I need to synthetically combine the manifold of sensations into a coherent image that I can apprehend, but I need also retain perceptions just past in order to be able to conceive of one object that is moving over time.

Lastly, there is the synthesis of recognition in the concept (CPR A103-110). Kant submits that just having a coherent image formed out of the manifold sensations and having this image connected over time to previous ones is still insufficient for the very possibility of cognition, that is, experiences which yield knowledge. Kant, of course, thinks that we do have experiences that give us knowledge. To explain this, he suggests that another synthetic element must enter into the perceptual appearances. So although this other element (the third synthesis) is specified as a condition for experiences of knowledge – not perception itself – its synthetic function does triple down into operations of perception in order to make experience of knowledge possible.

Kant's account of the synthesis of recognition in the concept is hard to untangle. Kant first asserts that there is a kind of unity or self-identity of consciousness. This unity of consciousness must first of all be thought of as an *act*, rather than a self-reflective awareness. As Kant notes, 'the mind could not possibly think of the identity of itself in the manifold of its representations […] if it did not have *before its eyes* the identity of its action' (CPR A108). The identity of consciousness, then, called apperception, is first of all the identity of the '*consciousness of something*' – not of consciousness turned back onto itself. Apperception can be the 'supreme principle' (CPR B136) of experience because of the unity inherent to what is given to consciousness. Kant is fine admitting that this synthetic unity 'may often only be weak', but 'even if it lacks conspicuous clarity […] one consciousness must always be found' (CPR A103-104).

It thus turns out that there is first of all unity in that which appears to us, which indeed suggests that the 'synthetic unity of the manifold of intuitions […] is the ground of the identity of apperception itself' (CPR B134). Now what exactly is this unity among my appearances that belongs to or correlates with apperception? As noted, this unity is not accounted for by the appearances that apprehension and reproduction construct. Why not? The short answer is: because those two syntheses said nothing yet about concepts. The unity of consciousness, Kant claims, must be the result of 'functions of synthesis […] in accordance with concepts' (CPR A112).

Kant's suggestion is that the third synthesis (of recognition in the concept) brings concepts into play in perception. But this should not be taken to mean that the synthetic use of concepts is restricted to that third synthesis; it works on *all* three levels of synthesis. All appearances stand 'in thoroughgoing connection among necessary laws [the pure concepts]' (CPR A112); 'identity must necessarily enter into the synthesis of all the manifold of appearances' (CPR A113), which includes even 'the synthesis of all apprehension' (CPR B162).

So to summarize Kant's position, the unity of consciousness (transcendental apperception) is correlated to the unity among the appearances and finds its ground there. That unity, in turn, exists because the pure concepts of understanding structure all appearances. Kant himself (by way of rare exception) could hardly have put it clearer: 'the original and necessary consciousness of the identity of oneself is at the same time a consciousness of an equally necessary unity of the synthesis of all appearances in accordance with concepts, i.e. in accordance with rules' (CPR A108).

The exact role of concepts in perception is the most clear in a section sometimes referred to as the 'second step' of the Transcendental Deduction.[16] Here Kant sets out to show specifically that anything that could possibly come before our senses stands already under the rule of pure concepts. This task, Kant thinks, demands showing that perceptual synthesis – not just the third synthesis, but even that of apprehension – inevitably involves pure concepts as rules. Pure

[16] This specifically concerns the B-Deduction. Kant himself indicates the two-step procedure in B144-145. The second step is performed mainly in B160-162. According to Fonseca (2008), 'the remaining task of the [second step of the B-] Deduction would be to show that 'from the way in which an empirical intuition is given in sensibility that its unity can be none other than the one the category prescribes to the manifold of a given intuition in general". See also the pioneering interpretation of Henrich (1969), and also Klotz and Nour (2007), Guyer (2010), Rauscher (2012), and Pereboom (2013) for their interpretations.

concepts, Kant concludes after a brief section on the unity in the intuition of space and time, determine 'everything that may ever come before our senses' (CPR B160). 'All synthesis, through which even perception itself becomes possible, stands under the categories' (CPR B161). This should definitively guarantee the objective validity of the pure concepts of understanding.

The pure concepts of understanding, then, understood foremost as *synthetic acts*, rather than as analytic concepts, prove to form the true heart of perception on Kant's account. 'Appearances' do not merely 'have a necessary relation to the understanding' (CPR A116); the synthetic unity of our perceptions 'is precisely […] nothing other than the synthetic unity of the appearances in accordance with concepts' (CPR A110). Sensibility gives us a manifold of data structured in space and time, but this means nothing without the syntheses of imagination for which the pure concepts provide the necessary rules. Without synthesis in accordance with concepts, perception itself would not even be possible.

Taking the Transcendental Deduction into account, it seems the intuited manifold of sensations is a result of the understanding and its concepts. Is Kant here contradicting his earlier remarks about the independence of the faculty of sensibility and its productions? Recall that Kant earlier asserted that intuitions are provided by a separate stem of knowledge – a task which supposedly could not be taken over by the understanding. Kant, however, is far from oblivious regarding this apparent contradiction. Instead, he simply readjusts his earlier view: 'In the Aesthetic I ascribed this unity merely to sensibility, only in order to note that it precedes all concepts, though to be sure it presupposes a synthesis, which does not belong to the senses' (CPR B160-161). By Kant's own admittance, then, it was never his intention to suggest that intuitions were the product of sensibility alone. Following the Transcendental Analytic, seeing objects involves concepts, and so all perceptual content is conceptually mediated.

### *1.1.5. Blind Intuitions?*

The previous sections exposed a substantial interpretative problem regarding Kant's seemingly irreconcilable views on the contents of perception. If we follow the pre-critical work and the Transcendental Aesthetic, we are bound to conclude that sensibility and understanding are fundamentally different sources. Moreover, the distinct contribution of the former has to be non-conceptual, first because of the independency thesis specifying the heterogeneity of sensibility, and second because conceptual analysis alone cannot comprehensively describe the world as

it appears to us, as incongruent counterparts reveal. But if we follow the Transcendental Deduction, we learn that all appearances fall under the *a priori* rules of pure concepts. The pure concepts have transcendental significance, which means not that they are occasionally activated, but that they apply unconditionally to all manifolds of sensations.

Concepts, as rules for synthesis of manifolds of intuition through imagination, determine all possible perception. This is why Kant notes that sensory input which cannot be synthesized through imagination cannot be experienced at all. For 'without that sort of unity […] these [manifolds] would then belong to no experience […] and would be nothing but a blind play of representations, i.e., less than a dream (CPR A112). Such experiences, Kant adds elsewhere, cannot even be made out to exist or not (CPR B131-132). Some philosophers, including McDowell (1996, 4-10), subsequently argue that Kant's remark that 'intuitions without concepts are blind' (CPR A50/B74) does not serve as a suggestion for a special kind of intuition, namely the blind one. Instead, Kant simply means to say that blind intuitions do not exist at all.

Much of one's interpretation of blind intuitions depends on what Kant would be referring to in the relevant section. It is useful to distinguish between two possible readings here. First, a blind intuition could be understood as a perception unstructured by concepts. This is what McDowell seems to have in mind. Since Kant's Transcendental Deduction, as we have seen, objects to that idea – because all possible manifolds of intuition stand under the role of apperception and the three syntheses of imagination – one will indeed be hard-pressed arguing for this type of blind intuitions.

Second, the concept of blind intuition could be taken to mean simply a perception that does not pair with an act of thinking, and therefore does not yield cognition. Just after introducing the term blind intuition, Kant says that 'only from their unification [of intuitions and concepts] can cognition rise'. The concept of blind intuition, then, figures in the context of an introductory discussion about the necessary components of cognition, not those of perception. It seems therefore plausible that Kant only wants to suggest here that *knowledge* cannot be just a matter of intuition (as Hanna 2008, Grüne 2009, 2011, and De Sá Pereira 2013 also claim, among many others). Blindness, on this reading, refers to the absence of a judgment explicating what is brought into view. In other words, it refers to an act of perception without a judgment – something which is surely possible.

So on the second, more plausible reading, blind intuitions can perfectly well

exist. On the first reading, however, which McDowell proposes, blind intuitions do not exist, but this is primarily because the term is here taken to refer to a perception not synthetized by pure concepts. I think this too is correct. Indeed, when Kant speaks of 'a blind play of representations', of something being 'less than a dream' (CPR A112), he does have in mind a perception without conceptual synthesis. But this is not what the term blind intuition initially referred to.

One could, of course, as some non-conceptualists in fact purport to, contest the first reading as well. In other words, one could dispute that a simple perception without conceptual structure is impossible on Kant's view. I have already shown that this idea is contradicted by the Transcendental Deduction. In spite of this, non-conceptualists are keen to look for ways around that. Frequently, they support their view by compiling fragments which seem to contradict the rule of apperception and the synthesis of recognition in the concept in perception. Here are two frequently recurring examples:

Objects can indeed appear to us without necessarily having to be related to the functions of the understanding (CPR A89/B122)

Appearances would nonetheless offer objects to our intuition, for intuition by no means requires the functions of thinking (CPR A90/B123)

Above, Kant confusingly suggests that objects can after all be given to us without the involvement of functions of understanding. It is useful, however, to briefly contextualize these remarks. Both sentences figure in a section which introduces the necessity of a transcendental deduction of the pure concepts. This means they are probably supposed to support the claims Kant makes there. It would, therefore, surely be odd to take them as evidence *against* the main point of the Transcendental Deduction. Alternatively, then, one could also interpret these claims as more or less colloquial remarks serving to introduce the reader to both the necessity and difficulty of a transcendental deduction. But even if one does not accept any of this, it is questionable whether ambivalence constitutes sufficient evidence against the role of concepts in perception as specified in the Transcendental Deduction.

### 1.2. Kant and Contemporary Scholars

### *1.2.1. Kant: the Father of Non-Conceptualism?*

The previous sections served to outline an interpretative difficulty concerning the relation between sense perception and concepts in Kant's philosophy. In this section, I look at some of the ways in which contemporary philosophers have proposed to address these problems. A notable amount of Kant scholars argues that Kant should be read as a non-conceptualist. In what follows I first offer an overview of the most important arguments these philosophers have presented. After that, I explain why I think they are wrong in taking their arguments to entail non-conceptualism about perceptual content. Although their cases sufficiently support the idea that sensibility is an extra-conceptual faculty, they do not show that Kant is a non-conceptualist about the contents of perception.

Below I collected the most frequently heard arguments for Kantian non-conceptualism in four groups:

*Even though Kant writes that all possible perceptual synthesis is governed by the understanding...*

(1) Kant occasionally writes that intuition can present objects without the involvement of concepts

(2) When Kant states that concepts operate in experience he has in mind the conditions for objective judgments, not plain perceptual experience

(3) Kant needs intuition to be non-conceptual in order to retain the critical function of the *Critique*

(4) Kant's pre-critical work shows that he believes space and time to be non-conceptual

Of these four claims, (1) and (2) can, I think, be dismissed rather easily, as I have done already in the previous section. As I argued there, a small number of remarks which serve to introduce the need for a transcendental deduction cannot suffice to invalidate that very transcendental deduction. Yet some prominent authors, including Allais (2009) and Hanna (2008, 2011a, 2011b, 2015), insist on the possibility of being presented with objects independently of functions of understanding being involved. Allais (2009), for instance, asserts that 'categories

are necessary for anything to be an object for me' but not 'for me to be perceptually presented by a particular' (Allais 2009, 405). Allais thus draws on a distinction in the notion of intuition itself: to 'be presented with a particular', which does not require the understanding, and perceptually 'representing a full blown object'. Kant, however, nowhere introduces such a distinction in the technical sense. Moreover, it seems the capacity to *see a particular* is precisely the sort of concept-guided synthetic achievement the Transcendental Deduction is all about (for one, seeing a particular involves the synthetic employment of identity and unity).

This leaves claim (3) and (4), which are not so easily explained away. With regard to (3), a big part of Kant's critical philosophy rests on the divide between sensibility and understanding and their *a priori* forms, which allows him to reconcile empiricist and rationalist trends of philosophy that had been battling during the 17th and 18th centuries. Some independent contribution of the sensible faculty must be secured, for otherwise the empiricist's demand that knowledge is restrained by experience is not satisfied. But Kant, of course, can fulfill that demand regardless of his specifications of the synthetic structure of experience. Even if perception is conceptually structured, it is certainly different from thinking. Only the latter involves the analytic employment of concepts and the formation of truth value propositions in judgments, while only the former includes the reception of manifolds of sensations. This ensures Kant's thesis of the cooperation of the two stems of knowledge is secured.

Regarding (4), it is worth looking at the argument developed by Hanna (2008) (also Heidemann 2012) based on Kant's pre-critical writings. Central to the non-conceptualism of Hanna is Kant's argument drawing on incongruent counterparts.[17] Hanna presents this as the *Two Hands Argument*, which is arguably his most important argument for Kantian non-conceptualism:

According to THA ('Two Hands Argument'), the content of perceptual states that pick out a perceivable natural object – such as a human hand – that has an actual or possible incongruent counterpart, is essentially non-conceptual. But it is clearly and distinctly conceivable, and therefore logically possible, that *any* perceivable natural object, and also *an* external part of *anyone's* body, has an actual or possible incongruent counterpart. […] So the cognitive need for essentially non-conceptual content is ubiquitous in our world, in order for us to be able to discriminate between

[17] Hanna's list of arguments is longer; some of the other ones will surface in different forms in *Chapter 2*.

things and their incongruent counterparts (Hanna 2008, 57)

In this dense fragment, Hanna sums up the Kantian doctrine against Leibnizian space theory, but makes it serve his own purpose of proving what he calls 'essentially non-conceptual content'. The argument is not fundamentally different from my earlier exposition. The idea is that since it is logically conceivable that every object of perception has an actual or possible incongruent counterpart, and since incongruent counterparts cannot be differentiated on conceptual grounds alone, every perceptual act must involve non-conceptual content. Therefore, as Hanna, Allais, and Heidemann among others claim, Kant cannot have been a conceptualist about perceptual content.

Does the Two Hands Argument successfully rebut Kantian conceptualism about perceptual content? If conceptualism means ascribing to concepts a determining role in structuring perceptual content, then it seems not. For even if we grant that non-conceptual content would be involved in perception, it would not be ruled out that concepts *also* shape it. The same goes if we endorse Bermúdez's definition. Perceptual content might still presuppose the possession of the concepts relevant to specify that content in a judgment, even when possession of those concepts *alone* does not suffice.

Perhaps the Two Hands Argument could at least establish that *some* content which cannot be specified conceptually must *also* be involved. But on closer inspection, we see that Kant's argument does not propose this either. Kant's point is that the contents of experience cannot be addressed by someone with only conceptual capacities. This, however, does not exclude that intuition's contribution can be conceptualized by someone who does have both stems of knowledge. Put differently, Kant is not saying that there are any contents that cannot be specified conceptually. He only suggests that the contents (which we can all specify conceptually) presuppose an extra-conceptual basis. The difference between these two claims is easily noticed: we *are* in fact embodied, spatiotemporally orienting observers with two faculties of cognition, and it is no problem for us to state the difference between left and right hands conceptually.

The way I see it, Hanna is right that for Kant having concepts is by itself insufficient for explaining our perceptions of incongruent counterparts. But this only proves that some non-conceptual element is a *necessary condition* for perceptual contents we enjoy; it does not prove that *what* we see need not involve concepts or would evade rationalization altogether.

To conclude this section: Kant subscribes to a faculty of sensibility which

contains pure forms and receives manifolds of sensations. These contributions, as Kant thinks he has proven among others by his analysis of incongruent counterparts, are extra-conceptual. Yet this does not imply Kantian non-conceptualism about perceptual content (or states)[18], for as the Transcendental Deduction specifies, the synthesis of the contents of perception presupposes concepts.

### *1.2.2. Empirical and Category Conceptualism*

The previous section outlined some arguments for non-conceptual content in contemporary literature on Kant. In this section, I discuss a number of prominent conceptualist readers of Kant. Since I already examined Kant's views on perceptual synthesis and the role of concepts therein in my exposition of the Transcendental Deduction, I shall here only specify two ways in which the role of concepts in perception can be understood. The first of these I call *empirical conceptualism*, the second *category conceptualism*.

Proponents of empirical conceptualism include Rosenberg (2005). On Rosenberg's reading, not only pure concepts, but all empirical concepts have a synthetic function with regard to perception. This means that for instance in perceiving a book, the concept of a book – an empirical concept acquired through experience – serves as the rule for perceptual synthesis (Rosenberg 2005, 129). As Rosenberg submits, Kant claims so himself in his example of seeing a house:

> Thus if, e.g., I make the empirical intuition of a house into perception through apprehension of its manifold, my ground is the *necessary unity* of space and of outer sensible intuition in general, and I as it were draw its shape in agreement with this synthetic unity of the manifold in space. This very same synthetic unity, however, if I abstract from the form of space, has its seat in the understanding (CPR B162)

Following Rosenberg's reading, Kant here claims that 'the non-perspectival concept 'house' […] functions as a rule guiding the construction of the perspectival image' (Rosenberg 2005, 130). In other words, the concept of a house here is what Kant means by 'the very same synthetic unity' which, Kant claims, 'has its seat in the understanding' (CPR B162).

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[18] Heck (2000) introduced an influential distinction between state and content conceptualism. The distinction is, to my mind, superfluous. I address this in *Chapter 2*.

The way I see it, Rosenberg *might* be right extending the synthetic role of concepts in perception to empirical ones. However, if we read carefully, it seems more plausible that Kant suggests that the *unity* which any sensible intuition in general contains has its seat in the understanding. So perceiving a house or perceiving a book is a synthetic activity in conformity with the pure concept of quanity. Nothing is thereby implied regarding the synthetic roles of the empirical concepts 'house' and 'book'.

Unfortunately, Kant says very little about the possible synthetic role of empirical concepts in perception. It is certain, however, that even if they play some synthetic role, this role cannot be transcendentally necessary; they are, after all, concepts derived from experience. Moreover, Kant has no compelling philosophical motivation to posit empirical conceptualism. Kant is primarily interested in discrediting Humean skepticism regarding certain universal laws of nature. By showing that experience is *a priori* structured by pure concepts, he effectively circumvents problems of induction which would undermine their *a priori* validity. While category conceptualism serves to defeat skepticism regarding the universal validity of certain basic natural-scientific principles (causality for instance), empirical conceptualism has nothing to contribute to that.

For these and other reasons, the majority of conceptualists in the Kant-debate are category conceptualists (among others Longuenesse 1998, 50; 2005, 23-24, 41; Allison 2004, 193-197; Ginsborg 2008, 69; Griffith 2010, 201-203). On this view, imagination synthesizes perceptual contents through pure concepts, such as causality and unity, but not necessarily through empirical concepts. I too think Kant is best understood along these lines.

Some recent scholarly work on Kant cannot easily be categorized in terms of empirical or category conceptualism. Grüne (2009), for instance, offers yet a different conceptualist reading, which she calls 'obscure conceptualism' (Grüne 2009, 27). According to obscure conceptualism, seeing an object only demands the use of 'obscure' (*dunkel*) concepts – which Kant on rare occasion (there is no mention of it in the first *Critique* at all) specifies as those of which one is not consciously aware. Perception does not, however, presuppose 'clear' (*klar*) or 'distinct' (*deutlich*) concepts – those of which one is aware and which one can analytically employ. It seems Grüne believes empirical concepts can also qualify as obscure concepts, which could make obscure conceptualism a form of empirical conceptualism.

To my mind, Grüne's theory is somewhat far-fetched as an interpretation of Kant's transcendental theory of perception. The fact that Kant did not assign a

prominent role to obscure, clear, and distinct concepts in the first *Critique* does not increase the plausibility of obscure conceptualism. To be sure, it is true that the employment of concepts in perceptual synthesis is not a subjectively conscious activity in the demanding sense (in the way judgment is). But this difference is already accounted for by the distinction between a synthetic and analytic use of concepts. It seems, therefore, that obscure conceptualism does not really fill any important gaps in our understanding of Kant's position.

### *1.2.3. Combining Category Conceptualism with an Extra-Conceptual Sensible Faculty*

I will use this section to briefly recapitulate what I have said so far and to develop my own reading of Kant's position further. First, it is undisputed that Kant distinguishes two stems of knowledge the cooperation of which alone yields knowledge. One of these two faculties receives manifolds of sensations; the other contains imagination and apperception. Also, both sides have their pure forms: space and time as the forms of sensible intuition, and a list of pure concepts as the fundamental forms of thought. These functions, so most scholars are likely to agree, cannot be taken over by the other faculty.

The dispute about Kantian conceptualism, however, focuses primarily on the generation of appearances, perceptions, and intuitions. On the one hand, there are places where Kant remarks that we can see objects without functions of understanding. Also, Kant suggests that, in order to explain our experiences of incongruent counterparts, one must posit something extra-conceptual, because concepts alone cannot adequately account for them. But on the other hand, Kant claims that all synthesis of manifolds of sensations is performed by imagination, and that this is done in conformity with pure concepts. The Transcendental Deduction shows that perception is not possible without concepts after all, and Kant even takes back his earlier remark on the self-sufficiency of the faculty of sensibility in producing unity in intuitions.

To my mind, it is best concluded from this that Kant is a category (pure concept) conceptualist about perception. This means that perceptual objects gain shape by means of the synthetic employment of pure concepts, and this synthetic function is what pure concepts in the first place amount to. It is definitely not unthinkable that empirical concepts also have a synthetic function on Kant's view. But it is certain that there is no necessity to be found here, and hence the possibility of perception without empirical concepts serving as rules is thinkable.

This leaves open the question where to locate the extra-conceptual function

Kant undoubtedly wishes to ascribe to sensibility, as is evident from his discussion of incongruent counterparts, among others. To my mind, this demand does not necessitate the positing of non-conceptual content. As I showed previously, Kant thinks spatiotemporal determinations of objects (e.g. left from right) require that some extra-conceptual element in play, but he does not suggest that the experiences of left or right hands involves non-conceptual content. What we see is conceptually structured; the point is only that that experience presupposes a non-conceptual element as a transcendentally conditioning factor. This factor, I propose, is simply a sense of *spatiotemporal orientation*.[19] To distinguish left from right one needs to obtain a place relative to the object to be determined. This amounts to taking in a spatiotemporal point of view, i.e. to be *embodied*. Although this point of view is necessarily extra-conceptual, it does not make the contents of any possible perception non-conceptual.

Kant, therefore, views perception as involving an extra-conceptual point of view while he also takes all possible perceptual content to be structured by conceptual synthesis. A spatiotemporal perspectival point of view is an extra-conceptual condition of possibility for any perception, even though all possible contents of perception are both informed by and open to conceptualization. To avoid any obscurities, these two compatible points can be put as follows:

(C1) Kant is a non-conceptualist about a part of what transcendentally conditions perceptual content, for perceptual content is conditioned by a spatiotemporal point of orientation which is necessarily extra-conceptual

(C2) Kant is a category conceptualist, for perceptual contents are conditioned by a synthesis made possible through concepts of understanding which secure their openness to objective judgment

As regards (C2), it is worth specifying that on this reading experiences are (i) *open* to rational scrutiny while this is so (ii) *because* concepts play a synthetic role in perception. Whereas (i) is the central aim of the Transcendental Deduction – to prove the transcendental validity of pure concepts regarding anything that could possibly come before our senses – (ii) is Kant's way of guaranteeing (i), among others in the second step of the B-Deduction. In the next chapter, I will specify (i) as *weak conceptualism*, and the conjunction of (i) and (ii) as *full conceptualism*. Kant,

[19] See also Kant's essay on orientation from 1786 (Kant 1996) where he develops this idea in some detail.

then, is a full conceptualist (which includes weak conceptualism).

### *1.2.4. Concluding Remarks*

This chapter discussed Kant's transcendental theory of perception as one of two representatives of the conceptualist doctrine. I first outlined Kant's views on sensibility as an extra-conceptual faculty and subsequently discussed his analyses of synthesis which give shape to the contents of perception. I then turned to contemporary debates about Kantian conceptualism, where I argued that in spite of the subscription to an extra-conceptual sensible faculty, Kant is best understood as a conceptualist about perceptual content. More specifically, I categorized Kant's position as *category conceptualism*, which is a variant of *full conceptualism,* according to which perceptions are all *open* to rational scrutiny while this is so *because* pure concepts play a synthetic role in perception.

I further touched upon the quite important relations between on the one hand Kant's category conceptualism and on the other (i) his conception of the transcendental and (ii) his anti-skepticism. Regarding the first, I suggested that Kant believes only the most general, non-composite, and not empirically derived concepts qualify as pure forms of understanding. Kant's conceptualism is subsequently also limited just to these most universal forms of the cognition of an object in general. In following chapters, this will prove quite different from both McDowell's conceptualism as well as the transcendentalism Husserl endorses.

Regarding the second, it is good to emphasize the importance of skeptical concerns for Kant's very positing of pure concepts as well as the conceptualism subsequent upon that. *Pace* Hume, Kant departs from an acceptance that we have synthetic *a priori* cognitions in pure mathematics and natural science, and from that departure point his 'Copernican revolution' first becomes possible. In other words, anti-skepticism motivates Kant to turn toward experience and its pure forms. Kant's category conceptualism, as a top-down determination of perception through pure concepts, then effectively becomes the only option to account for the objective validity of pure concepts – since given Kant's own interpretation a bottom-up determination would mean empirical derivation, and therefore would contradict the very idea of a pure concept and re-open the door to skepticism. In short, conceptualism, in Kant's original form, is closely tied to anti-skeptical ambitions.

This should conclude the investigations of this chapter. In the next chapter I

explore McDowell's conceptualism and the different philosophical set of problems to which it replies. The second chapter also discusses a variety of contemporary arguments for non-conceptual content both in analytic and phenomenological traditions.

# Chapter 2. McDowell's Conceptualism and Recent Debates

*Chapter Summary*
In this second introductory chapter I turn to McDowell's conceptualist thesis and contemporary debates revolving around it. In the first part, I outline McDowell's conceptualism, his notion of *Bildung,* and his views on reasons and nature. After this exposition I distinguish three possible readings of conceptualism. In the second part, I outline the most important arguments for non-conceptual content voiced by analytic and phenomenological philosophers today. Apart from offering an overview of current debates, I here demonstrate that most non-conceptualists do not successfully criticize the form of conceptualism central to McDowell's philosophy.

## 2.1. McDowell's Conceptualism

### *2.1.1. Introduction and Overview of the Chapter*

This second introductory chapter focuses on the debates about conceptualism and non-conceptual content in contemporary philosophy.[20] To a large extent, though not exclusively, discussions here revolve around McDowell's conceptualist position. McDowell's thesis in his momentous book *Mind and World* is that the contents of experience are all conceptual. It is good to realize that a number of theories of non-conceptual content already pre-date this thesis. Starting with Evans's *Varieties of Reference* (1982), the idea of non-conceptual content was popularized by among others Cussins (1990, 1993), Crane (1992), Peacocke (1992) and Bermúdez (1994, 1995). It was subsequently taken up in debates about phenomenal content, where it is now generally accepted by both representationalists (Dretske 1995, Tye 1995, Lycan 2015) and phenomenalists alike (Block 1999).

Part of the aim of this chapter is, however, to show that these concerns about non-conceptual content are often relatively distinct from the kind of conceptualism McDowell endorses. This is not to say that there is no connection

[20] Some sections of this chapter have been used in book reviews (Van Mazijk 2014b, 2014c), in *Diametros* ('Kant, Husserl, McDowell: the non-conceptual in experience', Van Mazijk 2014a), in *Horizon: Studies in Phenomenology* ('Phenomenological approaches to non-conceptual content', Van Mazijk 2017a), and in *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* ('Do we have to choose between conceptualism and non-conceptualism?', Van Mazijk 2015b).

whatsoever between them. But there has been a great deal of misunderstanding among philosophers regarding what it is conceptualists like McDowell are after, and non-conceptualists often appear to have very different agendas. Also, few non-conceptualists have shown careful concern for McDowell's complicated picture of the relations between reasons and nature which his conceptualist theory ties into.

This chapter is divided into two parts. In the first, I expose McDowell's conceptualist thesis, his ideas about *Bildung,* and the relations between reasons and nature. I also address in detail the motivation for McDowell's conceptualism, in other words, what philosophical purposes it serves exactly, and how this differs from Kant's conceptualism discussed in *Chapter 1*. This exposition subsequently brings me to distinguish three variants of conceptualism, which I call *weak, full,* and *hard conceptualism*.

In the second part of this chapter, I outline the most important arguments for non-conceptual content developed by analytic and phenomenological philosophers over the past years. Included in these discussions are Bermúdez (1994, 1995), Dretske (1995), Crane (1992, 2003, 2013), Peacocke (2001a, 2001b), Wright (1996), Heck (2000), De Vries (2011), and a number of phenomenologically oriented philosophers such as Hopp (2010, 2011), Crane (2013), Dreyfus (2013), Noë (2013), and Schear (2013). Apart from offering a broad overview of these discussions, I also assess whether they successfully target McDowell's conceptualist reading.

### *2.1.2. McDowell's Conceptualist Theory in Mind and World*

In his much celebrated but also controversial book *Mind and World,* McDowell aims to develop a satisfactory understanding of the relation between thought and experience with respect to problems of belief justification. His principal concern could be said to be to offer an account of how an experience can provide warrant for a belief. The very problem at stake, McDowell believes, is a conceptual one that we inherited from modern philosophy. It can only be solved by reconsidering the fundamental relation between thought and perception. The idea of conceptual capacities operative in receptive experience is supposed to do just that.

Let us first consider this conceptual problem in more detail, given that McDowell frames his conceptualism in response to that. According to McDowell, twentieth century epistemology has suffered from a certain dilemma

regarding how or by what a belief can be justified. This dilemma finds its roots in a separation of two realms of being characteristic of modern philosophy. On a (simplified) empirical foundationalist account, sense data provide us simple ideas that are causally related to external reality yet also inform our spontaneous thought. On this picture, sense data are somehow conveniently two-legged: while informing spontaneous thought, they also offer a foothold in a lawful, external reality.

The dilemma McDowell identifies concerns the different roles one can assign to sense experience. If we grant sensations the double role just outlined, we admit that experience has epistemic efficacy; it can provide us warrants for beliefs. To this extent, experiences belong to the 'space of reasons'. Yet at the same time, sense data also belong to external, physical reality. They are bare, natural 'givens', and to that extent they are part of the 'space of nature'. Like others before him, among others Sellars (1963) and Evans (1982), McDowell deems this double role of sensations unacceptable. The idea of conceptual capacities operative in experience is in part a response to this fallacious model.

On the empiricist picture just sketched, sensations belong to two images of reality at once: the 'space of nature', as an image ruled by natural laws, and the 'space of reasons', as a realm of human action and responsiveness to reasons. McDowell follows Sellarsian tradition by referring to this notion of sensation as the 'Myth of the Given'. To invoke the idea of a given, according to McDowell, means to extend the space of justification more widely than the space of reasons, that is, into the realm of causal nature (McDowell 1996, 7). The problem McDowell has with this is that a conception of causally impinging sensations can only yield 'exculpations where we wanted justifications' (McDowell 1996, 8). A belief may be caused by a natural event; it is not thereby justified by it.

To avoid a given, it should therefore be granted that whatever is located in the space of nature cannot function as a reason or belief in the space of reasons. This, however, brings us to the other horn of the dilemma. For it appears that if we drop the given we must opt for a coherentist account such as Davidson's (1986), according to which beliefs can be justified by other beliefs only. McDowell seems to think this alternative does not fare much better than the empiricist picture: 'coherentist rhetoric suggests images of confinement within the sphere of thinking, as opposed to being in touch with something outside it' (McDowell 1996, 15). Coherentism, or so McDowell suggests, denies our rational faculties access to the empirical world and is therefore prone to skepticism.

The dilemma to which McDowell's conceptualism responds has now loosely

been set: either we commit to a given, or we lose the idea of thought-exercises onto a world of experience. Neither of these options seems very appealing. What is needed, on McDowell's reading of the problem, is a philosophical explanation of man's place in reality that does not commit a naturalistic fallacy (as in early modern empirical foundationalism) but also does not suggest confinement imagery (as does coherentism). In brief, in order to circumvent the ongoing oscillation between these two positions, McDowell proposes that we regard intuition as already invested by the relevant conceptual capacities that could be put into play upon a discursive apprehension of what we experience. Experiences (or 'intuitions' in the Kantian jargon) unguided by concepts – 'blind intuitions', as Kant said – do not exist.[21] If we want to think of our thoughts as bearing onto external reality, then we should conceive of intuition and sensation as *already* conceptually structured. This way, we can maintain thought's bearing on reality *without* committing to a given.

Put as simple as possible, McDowell's claim is roughly that because perceptual experience is thus endowed with conceptual capacities, i.e. has conceptual content, we have avoided invoking a non-conceptual given to mediate the space of reasons and outer reality. At the same time, the very idea of intuition, as we also find it in Kant's transcendental philosophy, should suffice to preserve the idea of a touch of our senses upon the external world, thus helping us to avoid a coherentism or 'Cartesian' internalism. Intuition preserves a touch of our senses upon an external world, even though, simultaneously, the immediate contents of intuition are conceptual, thus avoiding the given. It can be helpful to note here that the external world in case is not one located outside of the realm of the conceptual (McDowell 1996, 54). In a way, on McDowell's picture, reality itself must be said to be conceptually invested, but it is nonetheless an external reality and one that we are principally in touch with through sensibility.[22]

I think it is important to be cautious with subscribing to the conceptualism McDowell endorses specific claims regarding the phenomenology of experience. Although McDowell (2009) has on pressure of Travis's 'The Silence of the Senses' (2004) dropped the claim that experiential content is necessarily propositional[23], it was never his wish to argue that conceptual capacities are

[21] See especially Lecture I of *Mind and World,* also A50/B74 of Kant's first *Critique.*

[22] Substantial confusion might have been avoided had McDowell been clearer about this. For one, MacDonald's (2006) discussion with McDowell (2006) appears to rest on a confusion regarding the sort of externalism McDowell endorses.

[23] The recent change of position in response to Travis entails, at least as I understand it, mostly

willingly and consciously employed in experience, as some phenomenologists have claimed (Moran 2011, Dreyfus 2013). McDowell does not wish to develop a phenomenological theory of our ways of experiencing things, and certainly the idea that intuition and thought both have 'conceptual' contents does not immediately imply that they are phenomenologically indistinguishable. Instead, the main point in *Mind and World* is that conceptual capacities are *drawn on* in sensibility. Perception is 'saddled' with conceptual capacities. This way, perceiving can still be a distinctively passive exercise. Yet the contents of perception are such that 'they can be exploited in active thinking' (McDowell 1996, 47), and this is due to their conceptual structure. The role of concepts at stake might therefore (at least from a phenomenological viewpoint) be closer to the Kantian synthetic than the analytic use (see *Chapter 1*).[24]

McDowell's point in *Mind and World* is supposed to pertain not just to visual experiences but also to color perception and phenomenal consciousness generally. For one, what a human being experiences when s/he experiences pain is not a pre-conceptual given which s/he can point out in a direct acquaintance with it by somehow clothing it in language.[25] As McDowell puts it: 'the idea of encountering a particular [pain] is in place here *only because* the experience involves a concept (*pain,* say, or *toothache*)' (McDowell 1996, 284). Or, to directly quote Wittgenstein: 'The thing in the box has no place in the language-game at all; not even as a *something*' (Wittgenstein 1986, s. 293). The central point here is that there is no duality of a bare quale and a belief about it. There is nothing simple to which the subject relates which bridges its beliefs to a radically mind-external reality. The absence of a bridge is not, however, a philosophical problem; there simply is no gap to be bridged between world and subject to start with.[26]

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that in order to make an empirical judgment 'one needs to carve out that [propositional] content from the intuition's unarticulated [non-propositional] content' (McDowell 2009, 263-264). On McDowell's later view, the perception itself does not contain propositional contents. McDowell now holds that perception has a certain categorial form which suffices for a match with propositional contents of thought. This categorial form concerns things like 'shape, size, position, movement, or its absence' (McDowell 2009, 261). This might bring McDowell's later position somewhat closer to Kant's category conceptualism outlined in *Chapter 1*.

[24] It should, however, be noted that the primacy Kant ascribes to synthesis is absent in *Mind and World,* where justification is construed as entirely within a 'space of concepts' (McDowell 1996, 7). This might be a result of Strawon's influence on McDowell, according to whom synthesis is best regarded an 'imaginary subject of transcendental psychology' (Strawson 1966, 32).

[25] See also Rorty (1979, 107-114) for a very similar interpretation of Wittgenstein's private language argument, which seems to figure at the background of this claim.

[26] This is not to say that there *can* be no gaps between thought and reality, sign and signified. It

In an earlier essay from 1986, McDowell explains his position in contrast with Descartes. Although McDowell does not put it exactly in these terms, the philosophical misconception addressed here might be best covered by the traditional philosophical expression *veritas est adequatio rei et intellectus.*[27] Correspondence theory, as here expressed, rests on the assumption that mind and world are distinct realms of being that can come to agreement in truth. This view has, especially since early modernity, been taken to involve an inner realm of ideas over against a natural reality that is the desired target of knowledge. Skeptical doubt and the discovery of an apodictically knowable inner realm led Descartes to transform this view into a relation between a mind and a world which are 'radically distinct' (Descartes 1980, 33).

McDowell's next move is to contest that we have to think of Descartes's newly recognized realm of certainty as giving us the whole story about reasons and knowledge (McDowell 1986, 150). The Cartesian picture claims that there are no facts about the inner realm besides what is infallibly given, which is of a substantially different kind than external reality. But there is no reason, McDowell says, to restrict the sphere of knowledge to that of inner certainty (I shall leave aside here whether Descartes actually claimed so). If we conceive of perception as relating directly to external objects, then the space of reasons can be extended beyond the Cartesian inner realm: it may 'incorporate […] the relevant portions of the 'external' world' (McDowell 1996, 167). This extension of the space of reasons to incorporate the perceived world is what the thesis of the conceptual contents of perception accounts for.

Broadly construed, then, McDowell's central aim is to provide a kind of externalist alternative to a modern internalist picture of the mind which puts us out of touch with reality. Simultaneously, however, he wants to prevent a commitment to the myth of the given. This situation leaves us, *prima facie,* in a state of oscillation between confinement imagery and false empiricist intuitions about bare sensations. On the empiricist view, the space of nature spills over into the space of reasons; on the 'Cartesian' picture, our minds float freely over and above an untouchable reality. By considering perception as conceptually 'saddled', we adopt a new image of man's place in reality; one which is not committed to a rigid distinction between both, and one which does not allow for

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only says that there need be no gap.

[27] Truth is a correspondence between the thing and intellect. This view is usually ascribed to Aristotle and later to Aquinas, but comparable exclamations can be found even before Aristotle. See also David (2009) for an introduction to correspondence theory.

a simple correspondence of elements between one and the other.

### *2.1.3. Spaces of Reasons and Nature*

So far I discussed McDowell's views on the conceptual contents of perception and the philosophical problem it is supposed to address. But the idea of conceptually 'saddled' experience stands in need of finer determinations. To this end, McDowell refers to our so-called second nature, which is where his notion of *Bildung* first comes to the fore (McDowell 1996, 84-86, 1998, 184-188).

The notion of *Bildung* plays a very important role in McDowell's philosophy, in spite of the fact that it does not figure very prominently. It is supposed to account for how our natural sensibility (first nature) can involve processes that are in a sense non-natural (second nature), insofar as they belong to the conceptual space of reasons. *Bildung*, as a *natural* potentiality that we are born with for the cultural development of a space of reasons, serves in a way to keep the space of reasons down to earth. On the one hand, McDowell thinks that 'spontaneity-related concepts cannot be duplicated in terms of concepts whose fundamental point is to place things in the realm of law' (McDowell 1996, 74). Conceptual exercises cannot be explained in terms of the space of nature. Yet McDowell does not want to suggest that the space of reasons is entirely 'extra-natural' either, as that would make conceptualism a form of 'rampant Platonism'. Crudely put, the notion of *Bildung* functions as a kind of bridge between these two paradigms of explanation.

McDowell thus aims to conceive of two heterogeneous 'spaces of intelligibility'. So how, then, can conceptual capacities operate onto sensibility, which consists of natural operations? The answer is that McDowell thinks of the space of nature as not exclusively a lawful space, and therefore, in some sense at least, it could involve conceptual capacities, such that 'a concept of spontaneity that is *sui generis* […] can nevertheless enter into characterizing states and occurrences of sensibility' (McDowell 1996, 76). Put differently, by widening the standard conception of the space of nature – it is construed as broader than the realm of law[28] – McDowell thinks he can maintain that conceptual capacities are

[28] 'So long as we do not dispute that something's way of being natural is its place in the realm of law, the concept of spontaneity functions in the space of reasons, so as to rule out the possibility that spontaneity might permeate the operations of sensibility as such' (McDowell 1996, 75). Also: 'We can acknowledge the […] realm of natural law, that is empty of meaning, but we can refuse to equate that domain of intelligibility with nature, let alone with what is real' (McDowell 1996,

'actualizations of our nature' – and to this extent that rampant Platonism is avoided – while at the same time deny that they are purely natural – to the extent that a 'bald naturalism' (which reduces all talk of reasons to nature) is also avoided.

McDowell certainly is not unaware that what he opts for appears ambivalent: 'it looks as if we are picturing human beings as partly in nature and partly outside it' (McDowell 1996, 77). If McDowell's conceptualist picture is to cohere, he needs to say more about the exact relation between the natural and non-natural realms, i.e. between the spaces of nature and reasons – and this is where the notion of *Bildung* enters stage.

According to McDowell's sketchy specification of *Bildung*, human beings engage in a process of cultural development by which they attain a second nature; a vast collection of habits of thought which structures experiences independently of the agent's deliberation. Such a second nature allows for 'having one's eyes opened to reasons' (McDowell 1996, 84), i.e.: for having sensory experiences that have the appropriate conceptual structure to figure in belief states. The idea of rejecting the given, as discussed earlier, is not supposed to involve denying that we have a first nature. Rather, McDowell's claim is that once a (potentially) rational agent has been raised with second nature through *Bildung*, the contents of his/her experience are, at least in one sense, non-natural, in that they belong to a (non-Platonic) realm of reasons.[29]

For McDowell, then, sensibility is at least principally a matter of nature. That is, it can, disregarding any conceptual operations that might be in play, be assessed unproblematically in naturalistic terms. For one, animals, McDowell notes, are 'structured exclusively by immediate biological imperatives' (McDowell 1996, 115); animal 'bodily goings-on themselves are events in nature […], they can figure […] *only* as mere happenings' (McDowell 1996, 90). The conceptual sphere of reasons, by contrast, cannot be so understood. As McDowell puts it, there are only '*some* [i.e. conceptual] second-natural phenomena that […] natural science cannot accommodate, on the ground that their intelligibility is of the special space-of-reasons kind' (McDowell 2006b, 236 my italics). The conceptual is therefore special not just for its role in justifying beliefs, but also because it supposedly is the only aspect of our experiential lives that natural science cannot account for.

This means we have two more or less distinct realms of explanation, namely a

109).

[29] See also McDowell (1998, 167-197) for a more elaborate exposition of two sorts of naturalism.

space of reasons and a space of nature. Whereas the sensibility of animals can be explained entirely in natural terms, the kind of responsiveness to reasons we have (also in our sensibility, as the conceptualist thesis specifies) cannot, because it is of the special, conceptual kind. In order to explain how the space of reasons can nonetheless tie into the natural world, as common sense demands, we have to posit a notion of *Bildung*. That concept should thereby account for a kind of 'genesis' of that which we cannot explain in natural terms *from* the natural realm, in order to ward off rampant Platonism.

Although generally neglected in much of the literature, this construal of spaces is crucial for understanding the motivation for McDowell's conceptualist theory. Two aspects are particularly worth highlighting here. First, as we have just seen, McDowell thinks (i) everything extra-conceptual (and only that) must be understood naturalistically, whereas (only) the conceptual sphere cannot be so appropriated. Importantly, this somewhat peculiar idea does not stand isolated from his conceptualist theory. Conceptualism is supposed to take place between rampant Platonism and bald naturalism; it seeks to posit a *sui generis* space of reasons without cutting it loose from natural reality. The notion of *Bildung* is subsequently called forth precisely to account for that peculiar mid-position; to show how a non-natural space of reasons can nonetheless arise out of our very nature. Conceptualism, as a theory about the contents of experience, is thus ultimately a theory on grounds of a philosophical naturalism, and it is closely tied to quite specific ideas about how a natural and an 'extra-natural' space would hang together.

Second, it is good to emphasize that McDowell (ii) does not construe the *sui generis* space of reasons any wider than the space of concepts. His conceptualism in fact presupposes (there seems to be no argument for it in *Mind and World*) that 'we cannot really understand the relations in virtue of which a judgment is warranted except as relations within the space of concepts' (McDowell 1996, 7). But, clearly, if the space of reasons only includes the conceptual, and if all lower level accomplishments of consciousness belong to nature, then it follows that perception must have conceptual content if it is to play any role in justifying reasons. Within this picture, ascribing conceptual structure to perception has effectively become the *only* way to maintain a rational constraint from perceived reality.

It is, therefore (i) McDowell's account of spaces and particularly (ii) his own conception of responsiveness to reasons as limited to concepts which make conceptualism such an attractive option here. Interestingly, Kant, as we saw

earlier, does not operate with either premise. As *Chapter 1* showed, Kant's conceptualism is contextualized very differently by a battle against skepticism regarding universality. Kant is convinced that only a turn to the subject's *a priori* structuring of world-experience can guarantee the absolute validity of basic principles of natural science. Since Kant agrees with the skeptical viewpoint that pure concepts cannot originate in empirical perception, category conceptualism, as a one-sided, top-down determination of perception through pure concepts here shows up as an attractive solution. Kant, then, did not defend conceptualism because he believed justification to be a matter enclosed entirely within a space of concepts, nor did his conceptualism seek to show how reason ties into nature.

For now, this exposition of McDowell's conceptualism, his account of nature, reasons, and *Bildung* should suffice. Many of these issues will resurface later on, especially in *Chapter 5*, where I compare McDowell's account of nature and reason to Husserl's transcendental philosophy.

### *2.1.4. Three Forms of Conceptualism*

So far I discussed McDowell's account of the conceptual contents of experience and how it figures as a response to a certain state of oscillation. After that I considered McDowell's construal of spaces of nature and reasons and the role played by *Bildung* therein. I emphasized that McDowell's conceptualism is tied to specific ideas about (i) the relation between these two spaces and (ii) the sort of things that can be reasons for a belief. Within this conceptual frame, which is at least not obviously shared by Kant in either respect, McDowell's conceptualism should constitute an elegant solution to the oscillatory problem he identifies.

For now, this should more or less capture the core of the conceptualist thesis as McDowell defends it. However, on a closer reading, it shows that McDowell says a number of different things with respect to what the conceptual structure of experiences amounts to exactly. With regard to this, it is worth distinguishing between at least three different conceptualist theses. I continue to refer to these throughout this work.

With respect to the role of concepts in perception, we can first distinguish what I call *hard conceptualism*. According to hard conceptualism, the contents of experience simply are concepts. This is, I would say, an intuitively implausible position. McDowell, however, appears to express sympathy for it in at least two places in *Mind and World*. Right in the opening of the book, he asserts that 'relations in virtue of which a judgment is warranted' can only be understood 'as

relations within the space of concepts' (McDowell 1996, 7). Further on, he repeats this idea negatively: 'if experiences are extra-conceptual, they cannot be what thoughts are rationally based on' (McDowell 1996, 68). This appears to suggest that only concepts can serve as reasons for beliefs, which could make perceptual content quite literally a type of concept.

Some critics of McDowell have taken him to support hard conceptualism. Although I agree that there is a tension toward hard conceptualism in McDowell's exclusive concern with conceptual structures as potential sources of belief justification, I doubt it would fair to ascribe hard conceptualism to him. McDowell is not out to suggest that there are no phenomenological differences between thinking and perceiving, i.e. that the content of a thought is identical in all respects to the content of a perception. If we look at those fragments where McDowell explicitly addresses the meaning of conceptualism, we find him endorsing something weaker than hard conceptualism. Let us consider the following three fragments:

The way I am exploiting the Kantian idea of spontaneity commits me to a demanding interpretation of words like 'concepts' and 'conceptual'. It is essential to conceptual capacities, in the demanding sense, that they *can be exploited* in active thinking (McDowell 1996, 47 my italics)

An intuition's content is all conceptual, in this sense: it is in the intuition in a form in which one *could* make it, that very content, figure in discursive activity (McDowell 2009, 265 my italics)

[This] is what it means for capacities to be conceptual in the relevant sense: they are capacities whose content is of a form that *fits it to figure* in discursive activity (McDowell 2013, 42 my italics)

These three fragments all state that it is intuition's *openness* to conceptual explication – not its *being* a concept – which defines its conceptual nature. I call this thesis *weak conceptualism.* According to weak conceptualism, the contents of experience are such that they can be taken up into rationality, and are conceptual just to that extent. Weak conceptualism in the sense specified only demands openness to reason of all experience. I take weak conceptualism as the principal thesis McDowell wishes to defend.

Lastly, on account of what I call *full conceptualism,* the contents of experience

are conceptual in this sense: they can be taken up into judgments in the way weak conceptualism specifies, but for that to be possible at all, rational capacities must already figure in them. The full conceptualist doctrine thus adds a conditioning factor to the weak definition, namely that some conceptual capacities must be at work in experience in order to make it open to reason in the first place.

It is not entirely clear to me what role full conceptualism plays in McDowell's conceptualist theory in *Mind and World*. Although there is frequent mention of conceptual capacities figuring in perception in *Mind and World,* which is said to be due to our *Bildung* – and which therefore points to full conceptualism – those places where McDowell explicitly defines conceptualism are usually formulations of weak conceptualism, as I showed above. I will not try to resolve the issue of exactly which form of conceptualism McDowell abides by in *Mind and World*, partially because I am unsure whether an unequivocal answer could be given.

So, at this point, three forms of conceptualism are worth delineating: weak, full, and hard conceptualism. In the second part of this chapter which is now coming up, I shift attention to debates about non-conceptual content. Here I compile a list of seven arguments which are the most prominent ones in today's debates. Many of these – although not all – have been directed against McDowell's conceptualism. Along the way, I specify the extent to which they genuinely oppose McDowell's theory. In the final section, I revisit my three forms of conceptualism and consider some alternative divides suggested by others.

## 2.2. Seven Arguments for Non-Conceptual Content

### *2.2.1. The Argument Non sequitur*

Perhaps the most significant source of criticism McDowell's conceptualism has had to endure can be found on page 26 of *Mind and World*. Critics have referred to it to point out a supposed fallacy in the argumentative structure of McDowell's thesis. McDowell suggests that since perception does not provide us with bare, non-conceptual givens, but instead with contents open to rational scrutiny, the content of perception has to be conceptual (McDowell 1996, 7). Some critics object that is not specified why the fact that an experience's content is not a bare given proves that it is conceptual. In other words, it is not clear why the exclusion of bare sense data demands the overly strong claim that all contents are conceptual. This criticism has been espoused, among others, by Wright (1996),

who suggests that the possibility of 'intermediate space' between conceptual content and bare Givens is not explored by McDowell. Similar criticisms can be found among others in Heck (2000), Peacocke (2001a) and Hopp (2010). This is the relevant passage:

> In a particular experience in which one is not misled, what one takes in is *that things are thus and so. That things are thus and so* is the content of the experience, and it can also be the content of a judgement […]. So it is conceptual content (McDowell 1996, 26)

As aforementioned authors claim, it does not follow from the premise that an experience allows being taken up into a judgment that the former's contents must be conceptual. All that is required on McDowell's own premises is that the content of perception is such that it allows being taken up in judgment. The critical point is that the class of contents that can figure in reasoning might be larger than the class of contents that are conceptual.

Although the mere idea of intermediary contents might not by itself establish an argument in favor of non-conceptual content, I think it successfully calls attention to the fact that McDowell bypasses the option too quickly. For McDowell, as for fellow conceptualist Brewer (1999), a content is taken to be conceptual if and only if it can be made to figure in a possible judgment (McDowell 2009, 265, McDowell 2013, 42; Brewer 1999, 149-150). McDowell is unambiguous about this:

> It is essential to conceptual capacities […] that they can be exploited in active thinking, thinking that is open to reflection about its own rational credentials. When I say the content of experience is conceptual, *that* is what I mean by 'conceptual' (McDowell 1996, 47 my italics)

The McDowell of *Mind and World* thus explicitly equates – at least in certain passages – the idea of some content's being an exploitable source in a judgment with its being conceptual. This way, any content that belongs to the class of contents that can figure in reasoning would be called conceptual, which amounts to what I earlier called weak conceptualism. A conceptualist could therefore reply to Wright that the mere fact that a content can be entertained in thought suffices for it to be called conceptual, which in turn might make any notion of intermediate content useful but ultimately also of a conceptual nature.

That being said, the argument *non sequitur* rightly points out, I think, the fact that McDowell does not consider any finer differentiations within the class of judgmentally exploitable contents. It is indeed a weakness of McDowell's thesis not to consider this, i.e. to call all weakly conceptual contents plainly conceptual.

*2.2.2. The Analogy of Non-Rational Animals*

The analogy between human experiences and those of non-rational animals has been advanced as an argument for non-conceptual content by Bermúdez (1995, 2011), Peacocke (2001a, 2001b), Speaks (2005), Hanna (2008) and others. The argument makes an intuitive appeal to our shared biological make-up with non-rational animals in order to establish the claim that we share some (parts) of our perceptual contents with lower animals. Given that some of these animals do not possess concepts, their perceptual contents, and consequently some (parts) of ours, are very likely to be non-conceptual. Hanna (2008) summarizes it as follows:

Normal infants and some non-human animals are capable of perceptual cognition, but lack possession of concepts. Therefore normal infants and some non-human animals are capable of non-conceptual cognition and non-conceptual content' (Hanna 2008, p. 43)

Above, Hanna argues only for non-conceptual perceptual content in normal infants and non-human animals. In order to establish the claim that human perceptual content is at least partially non-conceptual, his claim has to be supplemented. For this, the following fragment by Peacocke (2001b) suffices:

While being reluctant to attribute concepts to the lower animals, many of us would also want to insist that the property of (say) representing a flat brown surface as being at a certain distance from one can be common to the perceptions of humans and of lower animals […]. It is literally the same representational property that the two experiences possess, even if the human experience also has richer representational contents in addition. If the lower animals do not have states with conceptual content, but some of their perceptual states have content in common with human perceptions, it follows that some perceptual representational content [in us] is nonconceptual (Peacocke 2001b, 613-614)

Peacocke's argument rests on the presupposition that we share some of our

representational contents with the lower animals, and that our richer contents are supplementary to that. This presupposition appears supported by natural facts. Given that humans, gibbons and macaques belong to the same superfamily and evolved from a common ancestor, it is not unlikely that the biological hardwiring involved in our perception is much like theirs. Furthermore, since the conceptual and linguistic capacities of these animals is incomparably more limited than ours, it makes sense to address their perceptual contents as non-conceptual. This is, of course, a matter that can be disputed, but it certainly does not seem particularly odd to conceive of a macaques' space of reasons as severely limited. The established biological similarity is then able by way of analogy to support non-conceptual content in human perception.

There are two objections a conceptualist may raise against this argument. One possible reply, which is also found in Brewer (1999), Speaks (2005) and McDowell (1996, 114-126), is to deny one of its premises. Conceptualists can deny that non-rational animals enjoy the sorts of perceptual contents we have. In other words, the possibility that our rationality has a pervading impact on the totality of our representational contents cannot be ruled out. To be sure, our biological hardwiring might well be shared to certain extents by some non-rational animals. But conceptualism is not a theory about natural facts but about the space of reasons. Therefore, the analogy argument is a 'recipe for trouble', because it conflates the 'respectable theoretical role non-conceptual content has in cognitive psychology […] [with] the notion of content that belongs with the capacities exercised in active self-conscious thinking' (McDowell 1996, 55).

### *2.2.3. The Transcendental Necessity of Sensations*

McDowell's idea that we need not appeal to sensations in order to understand the structure of justification has struck many as counterintuitive. It also seems decisively non-Kantian. Neo-Sellarsians in particular feel that McDowell unjustly puts their hero in the camp of those committing the fallacy of the given. This feeling is *prima facie* not ungrounded, given that Sellars (1963) was one of the first in recent Anglophone philosophy to argue at length against the idea of a given. Moreover, neo-Sellarsians think Sellars was right to retain a transcendental notion of sensations, and that McDowell´s attack on the given does not warrant the exclusion of that notion.

As Foreman (2006) puts it, non-conceptual sensations are still necessary to explain how we come to have conceptual representations in the first place. They

are transcendentally necessary, theoretical entities that have to be posited in any complete theory of knowledge. Although such sensations have no epistemic efficacy regarding the contents of our beliefs (their effect can be merely causal), they cannot be left out of a complete transcendental story of human knowledge (Foreman 2006, 115-120, De Vries 2011, 49-53). Without sense data, no ascendance into the space of reasons.

This criticism is, I think, partially justified. It is true that non-conceptual sensations play no role in *Mind and World*. Yet, in McDowell's defense, a transcendental notion of sensations is not incompatible with a conceptualist stance. Foreman's point seems at best to complement the conceptualist thesis with a minimal notion of non-conceptual sensations without immediate epistemic import. It could further be noted here that McDowell does not deny that there are causal constraints on the space of reasons. First nature constrains second nature (see especially McDowell 1998b), just as the physiological structure of the retina constrains the spectrum of colors one can see. Such constraints do, of course, presuppose a point of contact between both spaces – which brings us to the transcendental necessity of sensations by and large absent from McDowell's thinking.

### *2.2.4. Incongruent Counterparts*

Quite recently, Hanna (2008) extracted an argument for non-conceptual content from Kant's pre-critical philosophy (see also *Chapter 1*). Although originally situated in a debate about the nature of space, the argument is not necessarily confined to that discussion. In brief, Leibniz's relational account of space suggested that mathematical point-to-point description of objects in space-time suffices to describe them. Kant, in response, argues that Leibniz's approach fails to account for so-called incongruent counterparts. Leibniz's account, which only considers mathematical (conceptual) determinations, is unable to distinguish between incongruent counterparts (for instance left and right hands). According to Hanna, the argument shows that Kant was a non-conceptualist: one needs spatiotemporal intuition, i.e. a viewpoint from which to intuit, to account for the knowledge we have of objects.

As I argued in the previous chapter, Hanna's argument does not hold up against conceptualist readings of Kant (or McDowell). Both Kant and McDowell maintain that the content of perception is dependent in some way on concepts. Although Hanna shows an extra-conceptual point of orientation is a necessary

condition for certain conceptual explications, the argument does not prove the existence of non-conceptual content. Hanna's point, then, undergoes the same fate as the Sellarsian construal of the transcendental necessity of sensations. In both cases, the argument establishes the need for an extra-conceptual faculty of sensibility as a transcendental condition for conceptualizing certain contents, without committing us to posit non-conceptual content.

### *2.2.5. Illusions and the Real Content Argument*

A number of philosophers and phenomenologists have appealed to cases of illusion to illustrate that perception must have non-conceptual content (Crane 1988, 1992, Bermúdez 1995, 2011, De Vries 2011). The core idea here is that to make sense of illusion, we need to posit two levels of representation. One of these levels presents the intentional object the subject is directed at; the other is a sub-personal representational content.

Sellars-scholar De Vries (2011) asserts that, since McDowell is reluctant to posit such internal representations, he cannot account for illusions. The general idea is that, for instance, in misrepresentation, such as in the Müller-Lyer illusion, two levels of representations have to be involved. On the one hand, there is our subjectively conscious representational content: we know (at least if we are familiar with the illusion) that we see two lines that are of equal size. However, our perception appears to be reluctant to accept this meta-knowledge and continues to represent one as being longer than the other. According to De Vries, the only way to explain this is by invoking two layers of representation: one at a personal level, the other sub-personal.

In a similar way, though from a somewhat different angle, Dretske (1995) separates 'systemic' from 'acquired' representations. He illustrates that with an example of two dogs which are conditioned differently. Whereas one dog is trained to salivate upon hearing a clarinet play any musical note whatsoever, the other does the same thing on hearing a C-note regardless of the instrument on which it is played. Now consider a C-note is being played on a clarinet, thus causing both dogs to salivate. According to Dretske, both dogs will have different 'acquired' representations: one intends a clarinet, the other a C-note. But at a non-conceptual level, they have identical representations (as they are exposed to the same sound data).

A third variation of this argument appears in Crane (2013, also 1992), where Crane draws on a distinction between 'real' and 'general' content inspired by

Husserl's *Logical Investigations*:

Every chance of alteration of the perceiver's relative position alters his perception, and different persons, who perceive the same object simultaneously, never have exactly the same perceptions. No such differences are relevant to the meaning of a perceptual statement (Husserl 1984, VI §4)

Husserl suggests that although one is typically related to a single object over the course of a perceptual act, the exact ways in which it is given changes incessantly. The side of the object directly given changes as one moves around, but this does not change the object of perception. It seems impossible to imagine that for every slight variation in the 'how' of a perceptual appearance there would be a different object given intentionally. Therefore, although the contents of experience might still be conceptual at the level of object-representation, perception must also involve content which is constantly changing. Husserl usually speaks of 'real' or 'hyletic' contents here. Crane, somewhat unfortunately perhaps, calls them phenomenological contents (Crane 2013, 245).

Since, as I argued earlier, openness to judgment is the principal criterion for conceptual content on McDowell's account, it might seem that the arguments discussed offer resources to rebut conceptualism. Since (as noted above) 'every chance of alteration of the perceiver's relative position alters his perception', and these continuous changes of content cannot all be conceptualized by the ego-subject, they have to be non-conceptual.

I think it is doubtful, however, whether these arguments present any serious obstacles to McDowell's conceptualism, at least to the extent I outlined them above. McDowell could simply reply that hyletic content is not a part of the experience of rational animals in the sense he is after. Husserl too notes that hyletic contents are constitutive of intentionality but not themselves intentional (Husserl 1983, 203). Without any further elaborations with respect to the role hyletic contents play in justifying beliefs on Husserl's account, it could fairly easily be argued that they are plainly a form of sub-personal 'psychological' content.

To be fair, I strongly doubt Husserl would accept reducing hyletic content to epistemically superfluous contents that can be explicated in the natural realm of law. On Husserl's account, hyletic content is not just sub-personal psychological content; it contributes to a clarification of knowledge. But to develop that point properly would, I think, require a much more thoroughgoing critique of

McDowell's account of spaces of reasons and nature from the viewpoint of Husserl's phenomenology (I pursue this further in *Chapter 4* and *5*). As it stands, the real content argument for non-conceptual content does not necessarily threaten McDowell's idea that experience makes something available that is open to rational scrutiny, since a conceptualist could set such contents aside as epistemically irrelevant sub-personal processes.

### *2.2.6. Skillful coping*

In the recent book *The McDowell-Dreyfus Debate*, Dreyfus turns to the works of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty for examples of pre-reflective, skillful action in order to challenge McDowell's conceptualism. According to Dreyfus, the idea that the understanding is 'inextricably implicated in the deliverances of sensibility' (McDowell 1996, 46) is fundamentally at odds with the phenomenological description of what he calls skillful or absorbed coping.[30]

Drawing on Heidegger, Dreyfus shows that we do not have to think about the doorknob on the door in order to use it to enter or leave a room. In fact, the doorknob does not have to be apprehended at all. Absorbed copings, on this existential-phenomenological understanding, are *mindless* activities; they involve no objectification and therefore no rationality. For Dreyfus, this means that it is inappropriate to characterize their contents (in so far as there would be any content here at all, on his view) as conceptual. To acknowledge the phenomenal structure of absorbed coping is to deny the permanent presence of operations of the understanding. The conclusion Dreyfus but also Schear (2013) draw from this is that McDowell's theory of conceptual intuitions rests on an over-intellectualization of human experience (Schear 2013, 294-299).

Does this criticism pose a genuine problem for McDowell's conceptualism? The basic structure of the argument just outlined appears to be as follows:[31]

(P1) The involvement of concepts requires an intentional structure that is founded upon a distance between a subject and an object
(P2) Absorbed or skillful coping does not involve an intentional structure founded upon a distance between a subject and an object
(C1) Absorbed or skillful coping does not involve concepts

[30] I also discuss Dreyfus's case for non-conceptual content in Van Mazijk (2014a, 2014b).
[31] I base this syllogism largely on the one Schear (2013, 294) uses in his reading of Dreyfus.

The argument against conceptualism rests in part on the acceptance of premise (1): that the involvement of concepts demands some kind of a critical stance that is typical for judgment. That presupposition, however, is denied by a number of philosophers, among others Noë (2013), Crane (2013), but also McDowell (2013) himself. As I pointed out already in earlier sections, the conceptual capacities McDowell sees integrated in experience do not depend so much on a specific phenomenology of experience; they do not require that a subject/object-distance typical of judgment is involved.

McDowell wants to convince us that experience is 'saddled' with conceptual capacities due to our cultural upbringing, which results in the openness of experience to reasons. According to what I called weak conceptualism, the contents of experience (i) have the appropriate structure to figure in a judgment while full conceptualism adds that this (ii) is due to the involvement of rational capacities in them. In the case of skillfully opening a door, (i) is supported by the fact that one can make the skillful action of using the doorknob figure in a judgment. Also, one can give reasons for having performed this action in hindsight. This particular experience is therefore not beyond rationality. Moreover, it seems that if I would I have lacked all knowledge about how doorknobs work, the building I am in, and about the room behind the door, then the unreflective experience of opening the door might well have had a different content. This indicates that some sort of rationality may in fact have figured passively in this skillful action after all.

A second example Dreyfus discusses concerns a game of chess (Dreyfus 2013, 35, McDowell 2013, 46-50). Dreyfus holds that a chess master may be 'directly drawn by the forces on the board' without making his move for any consciously entertained reason (Dreyfus 2013, 35). Again, the example is supposed to show that rational capacities are not necessarily involved in experience, because meaningful acts can also be executed passively.

But the argument is not very convincing. McDowell's response is simply that 'cultivated rationality […] is also operative in his [the chess master] being drawn to make his move by the forces on the board' (McDowell 2013, 48). McDowell therefore does not reject the phenomenology of skillful coping as Dreyfus argument presupposes. He simply claims that forces, too, are permeated by rationality in the same sense in which opening doors is. McDowell's conceptualism, then, is left unchallenged by the arguments put forward by

Dreyfus.[32]

Hopp (2010, 2011) provides a different argument against McDowell based on Husserl's early theory of fulfillment in *Logical Investigations*.[33] To put it simply, Husserl thinks thought by itself can be merely empty. The mere thought about a coffee mug on my desk does not give me the coffee mug 'in the flesh' as a perception of it would. Perception can deliver a *surplus* to the emptiness of thought in case a synthesis between the two intentions takes place. For instance, when I think about a particular coffee mug and subsequently turn my head to perceive that very mug, a synthesis of recognition takes place between these two intentions. The experience I am now undergoing could not have been established would I merely have had the empty thought of the coffee mug. Although in case of a vivid memory a 'quasi-fulfillment' between the thought and the memory may take place, only perception can make that distinctive contribution in the process of verifying empty intentions. Hopp's argument is that perception must therefore have extra-conceptual content, since the conceptual contents of thought alone can never deliver that contribution (Hopp 2011, 103-148).

Hopp (2011), then, claims that McDowell is unable to address the different epistemic roles played by perception and thought respectively, because he ignores the non-conceptual *surplus* fulfillment makes. I think this point is correct. There are indeed differences between how a perception verifies a thought compared to how a thought verifies another thought. In other words, justification through perceptual fulfillment is fundamentally different from purely analytical or inferential justification. McDowell's conceptualism, in its offense against the given and its restriction of the sphere of justification to concepts, fails to accommodate these differences. By addressing the contents of perception as conceptual, conceptualism blurs the justificatory differences between perception and thought.

The previous notwithstanding, it seems Hopp's discussion concerning perceptual fulfillment circumvents the question *how* perception can deliver its *sui generis surplus* in the first place. Conceptualism, by contrast, does provide an answer to that question. It offers an explanation as to why an intuitively presented content can figure in a perceptual judgment – namely because

[32] McDowell in fact endorses a broadly Gibsonean account of experience, which might bring him considerably closer to Dreyfus than the latter believes. See McDowell (1994, 202). It is worth noting that Dreyfus adjusts his view about the nature of the disagreement between him and McDowell in later work, see: Dreyfus and Taylor (2015).

[33] I also discuss Hopp's argument in: Van Mazijk (2014a, 2014c).

perception already involves the passive activation of conceptual capacities. So whereas Hopp thinks a phenomenological account of fulfillment forces us to speak of non-conceptual content, McDowell ascribes the very possibility of immediate perceptual warrant to its conceptual content.

In spite of the fact that Hopp's argument convincingly shows that conceptualism blurs different types of justification, neither his nor Dreyfus's argument really threatens McDowell's position. This is due, I suspect, to the fact that their definitions of non-conceptual content do not draw on *Bildung* and 'second nature'. For Dreyfus, a content is non-conceptual if the respective act lacks an active subject. For Hopp, an experience involves non-conceptual content if it is capable of intuitively fulfilling thought intentions. Neither of these notions takes interest in the specifically *passive* operations of rational capacities in experience (i.e. conceptually 'saddled' experiences). They fail to explain *why* perception can play this unique justificatory role, which is precisely what conceptualism is called to life for.

### *2.2.7. Fineness of Grain*

Last but not least, the argument concerning the fineness of grain of perceptual experience counts among the best-represented arguments for non-conceptual content in current literature. It originates from Evans's (1982) non-conceptualist account in his *Varieties of Reference* (edited by McDowell). The argument, as Evans puts it, is quite simple: introspection reveals to us that the contents of perception are too fine-grained to allow conceptualization and are therefore best considered non-conceptual. The argument thus claims that the visual contents one enjoys when looking at a pointillist painting by Signac, or the sounds one hears when listening to a Mozart divertimento, are simply too detailed to be fully conceptualized. As Heck (2000) explains:

> My desk exhibits a whole host of shades of brown, for which I have no names. The speakers to the sides of my computer are not quite flat, but have curved faces; I could not begin to describe their shape in anything like adequate terms. The leaves on the trees outside my window are fluttering back and forth, randomly, as it seems to me, as the wind passes over them (Heck 2000, 489)

It seems impossible to deny that perceptual discrimination of properties is far more accurate than their possible conscious identification. Because one cannot

conceptually identify the detailed contents of some or perhaps all perceptual experiences, the respective contents are non-conceptual.

McDowell has responded quite extensively to this problem (McDowell 1996, 46-65). Part of his answer consists in replacing Evans's definition of concept by a wider one. Evans specifies a condition for conceptual content which he calls the *Generality Constraint* (Evans 1982, 100-105). According to the generality constraint, a subject possesses a concept if s/he is able to use and understand it in different propositional structures. So to possess the concept 'red', one should be able to use it in a number of different propositions, otherwise one does not truly possess it.

McDowell's notion of concept or conceptual capacity in *Mind and World* is wider than this. The difference in case is roughly between (a) a person's ability to employ a content in a propositional structure and (b) to simply embrace it in thought. Whereas Evans defines a conceptual content along the lines of (a), McDowell focuses on (b). The difference becomes particularly clear in case of a so-called demonstrative reference. McDowell thinks a complex perceptual representation such as seeing a Signac painting is a content that can be directly exploited in thought, as in saying or thinking '*that* wonderful color pallet' (McDowell 1996, 57). McDowell assures us that conceptual capacities are involved in demonstrative reference, since one can recognize the state as token identical in a future experience of the same painting. In the same way, a wine expert may not be able at will to entertain complex flavor pallets in thought, but s/he can nonetheless obtain mental stores of knowledge of such flavors and identify them correctly when exposed to them.

Perhaps Evans would have disagreed with the way McDowell exploits demonstrative concepts.[34] Kelly (2001) objects to demonstrative concepts by adding the condition that concepts should be re-identifiable by the subject in different sets of circumstances. For a subject to possess a concept of a particular shade of red it should be possible for him/her to consistently identify a color patch of that color when held in comparison to other patches. Experiments show, however, that if a shade of red is put next to other shades of red closely resembling it, the subject might not be able to correctly recognize it, from which it follows that the subject does not truly possess the relevant concept. I think

[34] I think Heck (2000) is right that demonstrative concepts in McDowell's sense are essentially dependent on the perceptual state and therefore do not live up to the conditions for concepts set by Evans, which further means that there need not be a genuine dispute between them (Heck 2000 p. 483-492).

Speaks (2005) is right, however, to question this argument, as one's inability to perfectly discriminate fine-grained concepts of colors or flavors does not seem sufficient to deny that one is in fact having a knowledgeable experience of a color or flavor.

Although the argument from fineness of grain clearly has much to say about the nature of perception as opposed to thought, I have reservations about whether it contradicts the claim that perceptual content is within the bounds of reason. The fact that one can never explicate (say) all the details of a pointillist painting is irrelevant to this claim. McDowell's (weak) conceptualism requires that perceptual content is essentially open to thought, not that it is always an actual possibility to conceptualize it. The glimmering of an ocean surface at sunset admittedly has detail beyond one's capacity for conceptual explication. Yet by saying 'how beautiful does that ocean surface glimmer' one nonetheless embraces all those details in thought.

### *2.2.8. Ways to Think About Non-Conceptual Content*

The previous seven sections gave an overview of recent arguments for non-conceptual content. Although all of them have something important to say about experience, few of them successfully criticize McDowell's conceptualist thesis. I think this is due in particular to two factors. First, whereas McDowell is interested in responsiveness to reasons, most arguments pertain to sub-personal contents. At least on McDowell's view, which includes only conceptual structures in the space of reasons, sub-personal contents have no epistemic efficacy. Second, perhaps especially in phenomenological circles, a misunderstanding of McDowell's position seems prevalent, which results in an over-intellectualized reading of conceptualism as distorting the phenomenology of skillful coping.

This probably leaves the first argument by Wright (1996) as the most successful in presenting a challenge to McDowell's views. This is largely because the argument *non sequitur* is one of few which do not target McDowell's claims head on, as for instance Dreyfus's skillful coping argument does, but instead files charges on a conceptual level. Wright does not necessarily object to McDowell's solution, but rather contests the framework within which the solution is provided.

In this section, I want to briefly consider different ways to structure ongoing debates. In current literature, distinctions are usually made either in terms of *degrees* of non-conceptual content or *kinds* of it. Regarding the latter, Heck (2000)

famously distinguished between 'state' and 'content' non-conceptualism, which roughly corresponds, I think, to Speaks's (2005) equally influential distinction between 'absolute' and 'relative' non-conceptual content. Examples of distinctions in degree would be Hanna's (2008) 'contingently', 'essentially' and 'highly refined' non-conceptual content, Tye's (2006) 'robustly' non-conceptual content, or Bermúdez's (1994) 'autonomous' non-conceptual content.

I am not sure whether either strategy (degree or kind) could satisfactorily accommodate the different ways in which the issue of conceptualism has been addressed. Kant's category conceptualism is, for instance, indebted to his distinctively transcendental approach to consciousness, with its faculties of sensibility, imagination, and apperception, its anti-skeptical motivations, and a specific conception of the transcendental *a priori* as opposed to the empirical. McDowell's conceptualism, on the other hand, fits a very different construal of *sui generis* spaces of explanation, a philosophical naturalism, and a distinctively twentieth century analytic conception of the sorts of things that can justify beliefs. Things stand yet differently with for instance Dreyfus, for whom the conceptual seems to be defined in terms of a phenomenological subject/object-distance, or with Bermúdez, whose approach is broadly psychological.

This should cast doubt on attempts to categorize various positions by way of two or three distinctions. Yet the most influential distinctions in current literature try to do so. Heck's (2000) distinction between state and content conceptualism, for instance, which is more or less default in contemporary discussions, seems to me to face significant conceptual problems.[35] Heck suggests that whereas some philosophers talk about the conceptual structure of mental states, others specifically address contents. It is nowhere made very clear, however, what it could mean for a content to be conceptual without also characterizing that state as conceptual, or *vice versa*. Speaks's (2005) distinction faces, to my mind, not altogether different problems – it seems to operate with a notion of 'absolute' non-conceptual content whose conditions cannot be satisfied.

In an article I published earlier (Van Mazijk 2015b), I tried to exploit different positions in terms of a very general distinction between *epistemic* and *descriptive* approaches. On account of this divide, most arguments for non-conceptual content belong to the class of descriptive approaches, which means they approach the issue of non-conceptual content by trying to accurately describe them psychologically or phenomenologically. McDowell and Kant, on the other

[35] See also Toribio (2008) for a critique of Heck's distinction.

hand, would be categorized as epistemic conceptualists, who are focused on the contents of perception insofar as they contribute to a theory of knowledge. This divide between epistemic and descriptive approaches thus concerns a distinction in terms of the interest philosophers take in perception. Whereas one side belongs roughly to the discipline of epistemology, the other belongs to philosophy of mind, psychology, or phenomenology. Naturally, endorsing this heuristic distinction does not imply that phenomenological or psychological concerns are entirely distinct from epistemological questions. The distinction can be one of gradations of interest, or both may coincide, as is the case particularly in Husserl, whose phenomenology is an epistemology based on pure description of experience.

In another article (Van Mazijk 2017a), where I focused exclusively on the phenomenological reception of McDowell's conceptualist thesis, I distinguished three more detailed approaches which are co-extensive which the earlier two. Although I still think they can be valuable to phenomenologists, I shall not repeat them here in order not to unnecessarily complicate things further. I also will not make a lot of use of the distinction between epistemic and descriptive approaches throughout this work. This is primarily because Kant, Husserl, and McDowell all share a principal concern for epistemological questions. Although their epistemologies, as will become clearer as we proceed, differ in very fundamental ways – which indeed would demand delineating a unique approach to non-conceptual content and conceptualism for each of them – they are all occupied with the very possibility of knowledge and its conditions in experience. So although vastly different in significant ways, all three can roughly be classified as endorsing epistemic approaches.

The most important distinction I shall maintain throughout this work is the threefold one introduced earlier – between weak, full, and hard conceptualism. As I noted earlier, according to hard conceptualism, the contents of perception simply are concepts. Although, crucially, McDowell maintains we can only think of responsiveness to reasons as within the space of concepts, I would be hesitant to ascribe hard conceptualism to him. Given the overall implausibility of hard conceptualism, weak and full conceptualism are left as the most interesting options. According to weak conceptualism, the contents of experience (i) have the appropriate structure to figure in a judgment, whereas full conceptualism adds that this (ii) is due to the involvement of conceptual capacities in them.

Kant's conceptualism as discussed in *Chapter 1* is a classic example of full conceptualism, although only with regard to the most fundamental *pure* concepts,

which is why I earlier called it category conceptualism. I think the McDowell of *Mind and World* might also be a full conceptualist, probably even of the empirical sort, although I take weak conceptualism as the main thesis he wishes to defend.

### *2.2.9. Concluding Remarks*

This chapter served as an introduction to contemporary debates about conceptualism and non-conceptual content. I focused on McDowell's famous conceptualist reading and subsequently discussed the most influential arguments for non-conceptual content. I specifically emphasized the philosophical framework within which McDowell's conceptualism is situated and within which it is presented as a viable option.

The conceptualist theories of Kant and McDowell now at our disposal will form crucial tools for considering Husserl's philosophy. In the next chapter, I first turn to Husserl's (5th and 6th) *Logical Investigations* (1900-1901), which is canonically regarded the beginning of phenomenology. Following chronological order, *Chapter 4* discusses Husserl's theory of intentionality in *Ideas I* (1913). *Chapter 5* subsequently deals with the transcendental side of Husserl's mature phenomenological project, particularly in relation to McDowell's construal of spaces of nature and reasons. Lastly, *Chapter 6* and *7* focus on Husserl's later analyses concerning the 'genesis' of reason in passive 'pre-predicative' experience.

# Chapter 3. Sensations and Fulfillment in *Logical Investigations*

*Chapter Summary*
This chapter deals with Husserl's account of intentionality in *Logical Investigations*. In the first part, I turn to the fifth book of *Logical Investigations*. Here I outline Husserl's early intentional approach to consciousness and zoom in on his account of sensation contents, feelings, and instincts. I argue that sensations for Husserl can be taken up into certain intentional acts, but that taken for themselves are not intentional. This subsequently raises a number of questions regarding the precise role sensations play in intentionality, whether they are epistemically efficacious or not, and in what sense they might qualify as non-conceptual. In the second part, turning to the sixth book, I discuss Husserl's account of the justificatory relation between intuition and thought. Here I argue that Husserl completely revises the Kantian model of justification, rejecting both the idea of two separate sources of cognition as well as the privileged role Kant ascribes to sensible intuition in justifying beliefs. As an alternative, Husserl suggests a model in entirely synthetic terms, which rests on the idea that certain acts can bring 'fullness' to other 'empty' acts when they come into synthetic coincidence.

## 3.1. Intentionality, Sensations, and Feelings in *Logical Investigations*

### *3.1.1. Introduction and Overview of the Chapter*

The following five chapters trace the role of concepts in perception in Husserl's phenomenology. There are, broadly speaking, three different angles from which I attempt to do this. The first is Husserl's account in the fifth and sixth book of *Logical Investigations* (1900-1901), which is the one central to this chapter. The second, used in *Chapter 4* and *5,* focuses on Husserl's phenomenology after his transcendental turn. Thirdly, the final two chapters deal with Husserl's so-called genetic phenomenology. This is, not coincidentally, also the order of development of Husserl's thought.

As the name rightly suggests, the six books of Husserl's *Logical Investigations* are first of all *logical* investigations. The entire first volume is recognized mostly for giving the final blow to logical psychologism, a movement prevalent in the 19th century (and one which Frege had deemed Husserl guilty of in his earlier *Philosophy of Arithmetic* from 1891) which reduces ideal laws to psychological ones. It is only in the last two investigations of the second volume that Husserl ventures a deeper philosophical clarification of ideality through a 'descriptive-psychological' or phenomenological analysis of consciousness. Although at the

time some took this as a confused relapse into psychologism (including Heidegger, apparently), Husserl was (and remained) convinced that ideality can be traced back to consciousness's grasping of it, without thereby suggesting that it would reduce to that subjective grasping.

It is typical of the fifth and sixth book of *Logical Investigations* that it does not deal so much with the 'full conceptualism' I earlier ascribed to Kant and (secondarily) to McDowell. On account of full conceptualism, as I explained earlier, the contents of perception are open to rational scrutiny (in Kant's case specifically to *a priori* judgment) because of the role (pure) concepts play therein. Husserl's early phenomenology, however, does not so much ask about the role concepts, intellectual operations, or cultural upbringing have in our sensibility. Instead, it only attempts to classify possible acts of consciousness as they are manifest in consciousness and to describe how this can result in experiences of knowledge. This approach is usually called *static phenomenology.*[36] Consequently, full conceptualism in the forms endorsed by Kant (*Chapter 1*) and McDowell (*Chapter 2*) does not really figure here – which is why I defer discussions of it mostly to *Chapter 6* and *7,* where I elaborately discuss Husserl's genetic phenomenology.

The other main thesis outlined in the first two chapters, which I called 'weak conceptualism', specifies only that the contents of perception are open to rational scrutiny (without the added clause regarding why this is so). This question can, by contrast, be posed adequately from the viewpoint of Husserl's static theory of intentionality, but it works all the better if we take *Ideas I* and *Ideas II* into account as well. In these works, Husserl specifically addresses the question whether consciousness's intentional contents are always capable of being expressed or not. For this reason, I deal with weak conceptualism mostly in *Chapter 4* (although it resurfaces in the chapters on genetic phenomenology as well).

The current chapter, then, does not deal directly with conceptualism as found in the writings of Kant and McDowell. Instead, there are broadly two themes in *Logical Investigations* that are of particular interest here. First, concerning the fifth book, I offer an outline of the basics of Husserl's theory of intentionality and then look more specifically at the way sensations function therein. I argue that for Husserl sensations can be taken up into certain intentional acts, whereby they gain intentional directedness – as in feeling love or hate *for* a person. At the same time, I show that Husserl thinks the sensations considered for themselves are not intentional. This subsequently raises a number of interesting questions regarding

[36] Husserl himself introduced this term to retrospectively characterize his earlier work and demarcate it from his later genetic writings.

the exact role sensations play in intentionality, whether they have epistemic efficacy or not, and in what sense they might qualify as non-conceptual.

The second point of interest, this time regarding the sixth book, concerns Husserl's construal of the justificatory relation between intuition and thought. Here I show that Husserl develops a novel philosophical framework for assessing the perception-thought relation and the way in which the contents of thought are justified. This account involves among others a complete revision of Kant's fundamental distinctions between sensibility and understanding and between intuition and concept. Whereas for Kant beliefs have to be justified by sensible intuitions, which originate in a distinct source of cognition (sensibility), Husserl rejects both the idea of two sources and of the privileged role of sensible intuition in justifying beliefs. As an alternative, he suggests a model in entirely synthetic terms, namely in terms of the 'fullness' intuitive acts can bring when they come into synthetic coincidence with 'empty' meaning-acts. I conclude this chapter by comparing the Kantian and Husserlian accounts specifically with regard to issues concerning non-conceptual content and the myth of the given.

### *3.1.2. The Intentional Structure of Consciousness in the Fifth Book*

This first part of *Chapter 3* serves two purposes. First, I aim to offer a general introduction to Husserl's approach to consciousness in the fifth and sixth book of *Logical Investigations*. This primarily entails discussing the most fundamental distinctions Husserl makes pertaining to the study of the structure of intentionality. The second aim is to assess Husserl's position regarding the possibility of non-intentional sensations; to see whether that could indicate the existence of non-conceptual content, and if so, of what sort(s). The second part of this chapter then deals with the epistemological relation between intuition and thought, which I juxtapose to Kant's theory of perceptual justification.

The fifth book of Husserl's *Logical Investigations* serves primarily as a preliminary to the sixth book, which is directly concerned with providing a phenomenological theory of knowledge. As stated at the opening of the fifth book, meaning and objectivity, obviously central to all scientific activity, are essentially brought about in or through intentional acts of consciousness. Husserl further maintains that meaning intentions can be verified if they are fulfilled by corresponding to or 'coinciding' with intuitive acts. But in order to understand how that works exactly, we first need a more general account of what intentionality is. That is to say, we need a framework for thinking about how

consciousness comports itself to things in general, and this is what the fifth investigation provides some first steps toward.

Intentional experience, Husserl notes, is an 'important class within the sphere of psychic experiences' (Husserl 1984, 353). This implies that intentionality is not exhaustive of consciousness as a whole. It rather captures that essential part of our lives through which things are given to us. Every intentional experience involves something that is given, in other words, it involves representation (*Vorstellung*) – a concept which does not denote any mediation of experience, but rather only the presentation of something over-against. The concept of intentional experience is further terminologically equated with the concept of act. This means that when in *Logical Investigations* Husserl speaks of acts of consciousness, he speaks of intentionality, and *vice versa* (this also goes for his later works).

It is typical of the Husserl of *Logical Investigations* to identify phenomenological consciousness with all that is 'really' (*reell*)[37] inherent in consciousness. On account of *Logical Investigations*, all the different types of acts – of consciousness's comportment toward things – belong to the study of consciousness. The object to which an act is related is, however, not considered a part of the act, and likewise does not belong to the study of intentionality (Husserl 1984, 358, 427). The act-structure is said to contain, among others, the *appearance* of the thing (Husserl 1984, 360-361). The object itself, by contrast, is not a part of it. The conflation of these distinct matters – of the thing-appearance and the appearing thing – is what, according to Husserl, troubled phenomenalists such as Berkeley (Husserl 1984, 370-371). The phenomenologist ought only to investigate consciousness in its purity, that is, with complete disregard for naturalistic models of explanation and without making any claims about the reality of objects.

This difference between act and object can be further illustrated with a simple example. Let's say, for instance, that one sees a pig in the garden. The seeing of the pig is, in this case, an intentional experience one is undergoing. This seeing itself is an act; it is not perceived but rather lived through. The pig, by contrast, is perceived, but it is not a part of the experience. The same goes for judging that one sees a pig in the garden, or wishing that it is there. In each of these cases, the

[37] *Reell* (I translate it as 'really inherent') functions very different from the English word 'real'. At no point is the empirically real structure of consciousness at stake in Husserl's phenomenology. Instead, real inherence denotes a certain way in which to speak of contents of consciousness, pointing to those contents that are 'immanent' in consciousness, i.e. those that are *lived through,* as opposed to the objects *at* which acts are directed.

target object of one's act – whether a real thing out there or a merely thought of state of affairs – is strictly speaking not a part of consciousness. Whether the object intended in thought exists at all is plainly irrelevant to this (Husserl 1984, 385-387). What one experiences (and therefore what consciousness contains and what the phenomenologist studies) is (say) the thinking-of-something or the seeing-of-something – different acts which are directed at objects which in turn are not a part of those acts. Although this *adverbial* account, as it would today be called, is maintained after Husserl's transcendental turn as well, the status of the object in relation to phenomenological inquiry does change considerably. I return to this especially in *Chapter 5*.

Clearly, the previous example of the pig in the garden already involved different types of acts, such as judging, wishing, and seeing. In *Logical Investigations,* Husserl exploits these differences in terms of *act-quality*. The act-quality is basically the way of intending something. The concept of act-quality plays an important role in allowing us to understand how we can perceive, wish, or imagine one and the same object. One can, for instance, perceive a red coffee mug on the desk, form a judgment about it, or merely wish it were there. In these and similar cases, different act-qualities establish the same object-relation.

The act-quality also serves to explain how the same stock of *sensations* can be 'animated' in different ways. One may, for instance, see strange drawings and appreciate them for their aesthetic beauty, and only later realize that they are linguistic signs of a foreign language. Here, too, the difference between these experiences lies in the way of animating sensations and apprehending the object (Husserl 1984, 394-401). Gestalt images offer another good example of how one and the same stock of sensations can allow for different object-relations (Husserl 1984, 395), such as in the rabbit-duck illusion.

The sensations, on Husserl's account in the fifth book of *Logical Investigations*, form yet another class of contents of consciousness. First, they have to be rigidly demarcated from the object that is perceived. For instance, right now I see a red coffee mug in front of me, and I am currently listening to *La Catedral* by Agustín Barrios. In both cases, what I am directed at is not the sensation contents out of which both these experiences are, so to say, constructed. The manifestation of the sensations is, Husserl maintains, 'totally different' (Husserl 1984, 396) from the perceived thing. This is due to the fact that they are 'really inherent' in consciousness, whereas the song or object given through the sensations is not. But the sensations, Husserl continues, are also totally different from the intentional acts proper. Whereas the acts are characterized by a directedness

toward something, the sensations are not. They are, Husserl writes, 'building blocks of [intentional] acts', or at least *can* function that way, but they are never themselves directed at objects (Husserl 1984, 397). I return to this specifically non-intentional character of sensations in more detail in the following section.

So far, we distinguished between the really inherent sensation contents, the also really inherent intentional acts, and the objects at which acts are directed, which are no phenomenological concern. We further saw that whereas the intentional acts are always directed at objects, the sensations are not; they function as building blocks for intentional acts.

From section 16 onwards, Husserl introduces another element into this structure, which functions as counterpart to the act-quality: the so-called *matter*. The matter combined with the quality constitutes the *intentional essence:* that which any intentional act has, although it does not exhaust the complete *epistemic essence* of an act (I discuss the epistemic essence in the second part of this chapter).

Husserl first explicates the matter as roughly the intentional content of an act – for instance the judgments *2x2=4* and *Ibsen is the founder of modern realism in dramatic art* share the act-quality of judgment but have different contents c.q. matters. However, he immediately continues that matter is 'a component of the concrete act-experience' (Husserl 1984, 425-426). Rather than being transcendent to the act like the object related to, which Husserl also puts on the side of the intentional content, the matter is now specified as that side of the act which gives it 'determinate direction toward an object' (Husserl 1984, 429). The matter is, then, first of all that *in the act* which determines its concrete object-relation, i.e. which makes it about this particular object, and which furthermore determines precisely how the object is intended. It is not, then, outside of consciousness and the phenomenological field of inquiry, but instead a part of the act we live through.

Husserl introduces the notion of matter mostly to account for the fact that we can intend the same object in different ways, that is, through different act-qualities. We can, for instance, entertain thoughts, perceptual experiences, or wishes of one and the same object. This is because to these different act-qualities one matter (object-directedness) may correspond. As Husserl puts it, 'there are different ways of intentional directedness at one and the same object, that is to say, there are two acts with the same matter and different qualities' (Husserl 1984, 470). Husserl, then, seems to suggest that (i) matter determines object-reference, but also that (ii) the same object-reference implies the same matter. To say that we can perceive and imagine the same object in different ways amounts to saying

that there can be different acts with the same matter.[38]

Yet this does not seem to be Husserl's view exactly. For Husserl also remarks, later on, that it is possible for acts to intend the same object while having different matters (Husserl 1984, 497). This implies that the concept of matter is wider than the determination of object-reference – since one object-reference can involve different matters. This, in turn, means the second clause stated above cannot be true after all; the same object-directedness does not yet imply the same matter. 'Elvis Presley was born in Mississippi' and 'the King of Rock and Roll was born in Mississippi' have the same object-reference, but a different matter – a difference not accounted for by difference in quality (both are judgment statements). On the one hand, then, Husserl exploits the concept of matter to account for identical object-reference over various act-qualities, but he also uses it in a wider sense to include exactly how object-reference is determined, thereby allowing different matters for one object-relation (Husserl 1984, 429-430, 497) – much like the Fregean (1952) notion of sense.

To conclude this basic (and certainly incomplete[39]) exposition of intentionality in the fifth book: Husserl's account of consciousness involves an act-quality and an act-matter (which together constitute the 'intentional essence'). Both components are really inherent in the act. Together they allow us to understand the fundamental ways in which consciousness can be related to objects, which themselves do not belong to (the study of) consciousness. As a third component, there is the stratum of sensations, which is also really inherent, but not itself intentional. In the following section, I provide a more detailed reading of Husserl's discussion of sensations and their possible role in acts of feeling.

### *3.1.3. On Feelings, Sensations, and Dark Longings*

In the previous section I outlined some basic elements of Husserl's approach to intentional acts in the fifth book of *Logical Investigations*. In this section, I take a closer look at a specific kind of act which Husserl treats in special detail, namely that of feeling. The reason feelings are worthy of separate treatment is, Husserl notes, that it is not obvious whether they can all be classified as intentional acts. It might be that there are feelings which are only partially intentional, or perhaps even entirely non-intentional.

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[38] Husserl suggests the same point in the unpublished manuscripts *Studien zur Struktur des Bewusstseins,* text nr. 4, s. 1.

[39] See also Mohanty (1964) and Smith (1977) for their introductory overviews.

As I mentioned previously, every act on Husserl's (as well as Brentano's) picture involves representation, i.e. the intentional directedness toward something. This is simply what defines an act. Whether one wishes, perceives, or judges, there is always *something* the act is related to. The same goes, Husserl notes, for many of the feelings we may have. Whether we enjoy a melody, are agitated by a shrill whistle, or feel sorrow over someone we lost, the feelings in case are about something – namely *what* we hear or are sorrowful about. These feeling acts, as Husserl adopts from Brentano, must be understood as *founded upon* simpler acts of representation. We can for instance simply intend a melody, but we can also intend a melody and experience joy in that. According to Husserl, wherever there is feeling involved in an act – as in the feeling of joy upon hearing a melody – we must understand it as being founded upon a simpler act of representation. This founded act is not, however, distinct from the founding act of the simple representation either; it blends with it. This means that we do not undergo one intention of listening to a melody and another one of joy. Instead, we have one founded act of *listening with enjoyment*. The enjoyment, then, is not a mere add-on to the founding act; it is likewise directed at its object. So even if acts are complexly layered, there is always a single, unitary act we experience (Husserl 1984, 443, 466).

The previous seems to provide sufficient evidence already that there are indeed intentional feelings. That is to say: there are founded acts which involve a partial act of representation and a partial act of feeling, which are blended into a unitary act. However, one might still insist here that the feelings proper are in fact not intentional at all. Even though the act of presenting is intentional – for instance listening to a melody – the feeling itself – joy, agitation, or the like – only latches onto that. *It* is not intentional.

But Husserl retorts that at least in most usual cases it is simply not true that feelings just latch onto intentional acts. As we just saw, one is usually joyful *about* a melody, agitated *about* a shrill tone, or sad *about* someone's passing. In most ordinary cases, joy, agitation, sadness, etc. are not possible without such object-directedness – not because of some causal relation between the feeling and the object[40], but simply because these feelings are by their essence intentionally directed at something. We cannot imagine sorrow without the sorrow being about something. This is, not coincidentally, also Brentano's position, and at least with regard to examples of the sort listed Husserl seems to agree with it (Husserl

[40] Since phenomenology seeks to abandon all theoretical-constructive and empirical thinking in order to take recourse solely to experience, reference to causal relations are excluded.

1984, 402-404).

Yet Husserl grants that some feelings cannot be qualified as intentional. For instance, pain sensations do not seem to be of the same order as the feelings of joy, agitation, or sorrow discussed earlier. They are, Husserl, notes, more like raw sensation contents, comparable to the color data in seeing a red object.[41] Husserl admits that even such pain sensations do usually contain a reference both to one's aching body part as well as to the object which caused that. But in spite of this, he deems it evident that '*no one would think of referring to the sensations themselves as [intentional] experiences*' (Husserl 1984, 406 my italics). In other words, we must distinguish *feeling acts* from *sensations* (the 'qualitative content' in more contemporary idiom). Husserl, then, rejects Brentano's intentionalist construal of sensations after all, for on Husserl's view 'sensations themselves are not acts' (Husserl 1984, 406). To put it more precisely, Husserl concludes that both Brentano's as well as the opposing view are partially right. Whereas some feelings can be intentional, namely insofar they have object-directedness through being founded upon founding acts of representation, the specifically sensory quality of sensations cannot be intentional.

It turns out, then, as Husserl further points out, that we generally use the term 'feeling' ambiguously for very different matters. First, there are feeling acts which obtain an intentional character (Husserl 1984, 408-409). Feelings can take their place in founded acts and thereby become directed at objects, as for instance in feeling joy for winning the lottery or feeling love for someone. Second, there are sensations, which are never acts for themselves and therefore are non-intentional.[42] This second notion (of non-intentional sensations) Husserl roughly maintains in *Ideas I,* where it is called *hyle* (see *Chapter 4*), and it becomes a central phenomenological theme of its own in terms of *fields of sense* in later genetic investigations (see *Chapter 6*).

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[41] In color perception, just as in the case of pain, the notion of sensation should refer not to the properties represented but to the sensation data immanent in consciousness. I return to this ambiguity of the notion of sensation – as intentionally represented features versus as non-intentional data – in the context of *Ideas I* in *Chapter 4*. See also Smith (1977, 482-483) for an interpretation similar to mine.

[42] One could distinguish a third notion, since Husserl also admits of Brentano's suggestion that sensations are 'physical phenomena' (Husserl 1984, 408), insofar as we here take the notion to refer to properties of what we intend, i.e. to the object-side (e.g. seeing a red object). A physical phenomenon, on Brentano's definition, is something that can only be externally perceived (Brentano 2009, 70); it is the color or shape I see, the musical chord I hear, etc., which in each case points to the object of the acts, not the really inherent sensations.

Husserl concludes his discussion of feelings by considering a final problem posed by certain feelings which we are tempted to classify as intentional, but which have no obvious target of directedness. This goes, for instance, for certain 'dark longings and urges' and also 'for the broader sphere of natural instincts' (Husserl 1984, 409-410). According to Husserl, we have two options here: either they are bare sensational contents, which are therefore non-intentional – or we address them as *undetermined intentions*, that is to say, as intentional acts which relate only vaguely to an 'undetermined 'something'' (Husserl 1984, 410). However, Husserl quickly concludes that the question how to categorize this or that dark longing or instinct may remain undecided here. This is simply because the existence of both non-intentional sensations and intentional feelings has been recognized at this point already. Therefore, we are free to classify each individual dark longing or instinct as we feel is most appropriate.

So far I discussed (i) Husserl's Brentano-inspired account of feeling acts as founded acts, (ii) his interpretation of sensations (qualitative content) as non-intentional, and (iii) the problem of intentionally undetermined instincts and dark longings. With regard to the question of non-conceptual content in *Logical Investigations*, the second point should stand out as the most interesting. For the fact that sensations are non-intentional seems to imply that they are also non-conceptual. Although we can focus our attention on sensory contents in reflection, there is a sense in which sensations are not a part of the sphere of openness to reason which characterizes experience on for instance McDowell's account. In other words, because sensations function precisely as the non-intentional building blocks for the acts which give us intentional objects, the sensations themselves are no intentional objects. This means they cannot be part of the space of reasons as McDowell speaks of it, which would make them non-conceptual at least from that viewpoint.

Given that sensations for Husserl function as the building blocks of acts, they can be taken as non-intentional conditions of possibility of those acts, much in the same way as the neo-Sellarsian notion of transcendentally necessary sensations discussed in *Chapter 2*. On that account as on Husserl's, sensations are necessary for intentional experience, but they are not themselves intentionally experienced. However, as I also noted in my discussions in *Chapter 2*, I think it is doubtful that this notion of non-conceptual content poses great difficulties for conceptualists. What would be needed for that is a notion of content that not only qualifies as non-conceptual, but which is also epistemically efficacious. The transcendentally necessary notion of sensations on the neo-Sellarsian reading

does not establish the latter. It specifies a non-conceptual condition for experience's openness to reason (in Husserl's case sensations as building blocks of acts), but it does not show that the space of reasons involves non-conceptual content (because those sensations are not experienced intentionally).

It would of course be very interesting to analyze how exactly Husserl understands the epistemic relation between non-intentional sensations and intentional acts. Are sensations entirely cut off from the space of reasons because they lack an inherent intentional directedness? Or do they perhaps play some important epistemic role after all, regardless of the fact that they would qualify as non-conceptual on McDowell's terms? Unfortunately, it is difficult to untangle Husserl's views as to the epistemic role non-intentional sensations play in *Logical Investigations*. We can briefly explore this problem here.

Clearly, the place non-intentional sensory contents take in Husserl's theory of intentionality will determine the place they take in a theory of knowledge. The former is, after all, Husserl's way of achieving the latter. We need, therefore, only to determine how Husserl conceives of these non-intentional sensations in the structure of intentionality in order to see what role they play in the structure of knowledge.

To this end, we could first repeat that the fifth investigation does not completely isolate sensation contents from knowledge-yielding intentional acts. After all, they can figure in founding acts. One can feel love *for* a person. Feelings, then, can be intentionally directed, and the other person who now appears 'in a rosy gleam' (Husserl 1984, 408) certainly figures in the space of reasons. Not just feeling acts but any intentional act can, as Husserl discusses at the opening of the sixth book, be brought to expression (Husserl 1984, 544) – a view maintained in *Ideas I* and *Ideas II*. Husserl, however, as we saw previously, demarcates these feeling acts from the sensation contents that figure in them, and of the latter 'no one would think of referring to […] as [intentional] experiences' (Husserl 1984, 406). It is the location of this latter class of non-intentional sensations that is at stake here – and this Husserl unfortunately is not very clear about.

Although Husserl appropriates sensations as components of really inherent consciousness (Husserl 1984, 387), their contribution to intentional acts is nowhere characterized more concretely in *Logical Investigations* than by reference to the idea of 'building blocks'. The relation between such building blocks and the acts built upon them is not, however, clarified in any detail. The occasional characterization of sensory contents as 'totally different' (Husserl 1984, 396) does

not help establishing whatever common ground one might think must be shared by them. This lack of clarity becomes further problematized by Husserl's referring to the sensory contents as 'psychophysical' (Husserl 1984, 408). Taken at face value, this idea cannot be reconciled with their characterization as really inherent contents of consciousness. The same sensation contents cannot be located in the structure of pure consciousness *and* in the space of nature; that would effectively amount to the myth of the given.[43]

It appears, then, that Husserl's account in the fifth book of *Logical Investigations* is at least somewhat unclear about the status of non-intentional sensory contents in the structure of intentionality. This means their exact epistemic import is not fully transparent either. Given, however, that Husserl is fairly clear about the complete disregard of physical (and thus also psychophysical) being (Husserl 1984, 364, 765-766) in the study of pure consciousness, his notion of sensations certainly cannot straightforwardly be said to commit to the myth of the given. In *Logical Investigations,* sensations do not have a foothold in nature and another one in the space of reasons. But even so, the phenomenological relation between sensory content and intentional animation does not receive much attention here, and hence the former's role in a phenomenological theory of knowledge is not yet present in its clearest form.

### 3.2. Emptiness and Intuitive Fullness

#### *3.2.1. Introduction*

In the previous part I focused on Husserl's theory of intentionality in the fifth book of *Logical Investigations.* These basic expositions yielded some interesting insights specifically with regard to the problem of the intentionality of sensations and feelings. We discovered that although sensations can be taken up into feeling acts – thereby becoming directed at an object – they are not intentional (and also not conceptual) of themselves. A further clarification of such non-intentional sensations and their place in a phenomenological theory of knowledge will become our topic again in *Chapter 6* on the later genetic phenomenology, by which time Husserl has greatly deepened his understanding of the phenomenological role of sensations.

In this second part I turn to the investigations of the sixth book of *Logical*

[43] The confusion, if urgent at all in *Logical Investigations*, is arguably less pressing in the second edition from 1913, see the added section in Husserl (1984, 405).

*Investigations*, a work in phenomenological epistemology. There are, or so I will argue, two great insights these investigations contain that are of special interest to us. One concerns Husserl's reconceptualization of the Kantian notions of intuition and concept. Husserl's central distinction between *intuitive* and *signitive* intentional acts is, we will see, a radical departure from and indeed attack on this Kantian distinction. Whereas, broadly speaking, the conceptual side is reconceived by Husserl in terms of signitive or meaning acts, intuition is extended far beyond its Kantian significance; it includes not only perception, but also imagination, so-called categorial intuition, and eidetic intuition. This reading subsequently calls forth an entirely different account of epistemic warrant, specified in terms of the *fullness* which various types of intuition can provide to signitive intentions. The phenomenological structure of bringing together intuitive fullness and signitive intention – which Husserl refers to as a *synthesis of fulfillment* – will be our second point of interest.

### *3.2.2. On Signitive and Intuitive Acts*

First we may recall that in *Logical Investigations,* Husserl's interest with regard to consciousness goes out exclusively to the sphere of intentional acts. This interest follows from his conviction that the scientific acquisition of knowledge necessarily unfolds through intentional acts. A philosophical clarification of knowledge must therefore seek its beginning not in language, logic, or mathematics, but in the direct description of how acts of knowledge are (and must be, according to phenomenological laws) executed in consciousness.

The fifth book of *Logical Investigations* introduced a crucial distinction between act-quality and act-matter, which allowed us to understand how we can relate to the same object in different ways. This can be either through variations of quality – as in condemning or regretting Tiberius's succession of Augustus - or through variations in matter – as in judging that Tiberius succeeded Augustus or that he succeeded Octavianus. Each act, Husserl explains, must have a quality and a matter, which is why they constitute the act's intentional essence. However, matter and quality alone cannot clarify the phenomenological operations of either *acquiring* or *justifying* knowledge. Put differently, while each act may have its intentional essence, little is thereby learned about what the acquisition of knowledge amounts to or about how various sorts of beliefs get their verification.

To this end, the sixth book introduces another crucial distinction within the class of intentional acts. This is referred to as the *interpretative form* of acts (Husserl

1984, 624), of which Husserl distinguishes two kinds: *signitive* and *intuitive* ones. This means, then, that we now classify all acts as either signitive or intuitive (or a mix between both), while all of them in turn have a quality and a matter. The new distinction is of great importance to the sixth book, since, as Husserl notes, all knowledge refers to the relationship between signitive and intuitive acts (Husserl 1984, 736). In a way, moreover, the distinction should provide an alternative to the Kantian separation of concept and intuition. It now comes to capturing this distinction between these two classes of acts appropriately.

We can start with signitive acts. It is crucial that on Husserl's account signitive acts alone are meaning (*Bedeutung*) acts. That is to say, signitive acts are intentional acts which express or give voice to meaning. In the first sections of the sixth book, Husserl puts considerable effort in showing that the meaning of an expressing act is always contained in special signitive acts – which are founded acts – and never, for instance, in a simple founding act of seeing. To sustain this, he offers elaborate discussions of what we today would call demonstrative reference, where the 'place' of the expressed meaning is arguably most difficult to decide. An example of a demonstrative reference would be seeing a blackbird and subsequently judging '*this* is a blackbird'. Here we have a judgment tied directly to the perceptual content at which it is directed.

In short, Husserl accepts that the simple perception of the blackbird both conditions and (partially) determines the meaning subsequently expressed; it gives the latter a concrete object-directedness. But in spite of this, the perception does not contain the act of meaning (Husserl 1984, 554). As Husserl notes, 'when I say *this*, I do not plainly perceive; instead, on the basis of seeing a *new act* builds itself, which directs itself to it and […] which is dependent upon it, namely the act of meaning-this' (Husserl 1984, 554 my italics). This new act of meaning something – the signitive act – is built onto the perception and is directed at its content. Yet the meaning act can also do without the perception; it can be (re-)formed independently of the perception (Husserl 1984, 556). Therefore, although the judgment is about an actually given situation, the meaning expression is not somehow 'in' that situation or in the act through which it comes to givenness. The expression is rather an act founded upon that.

Husserl, then, basically isolates the pure act of objectively meaning or expressing something from (in this example) the concrete act of seeing. The latter here provides all the richness of content; the former only the act of expression. This is why Husserl remarks that the act of meaning is in itself a completely *empty* act (Husserl 1984, 607). To be sure, in everyday experience, signitive acts are

frequently mixed with founding acts. They are rarely or perhaps even never completely empty. If, for instance, someone would shout 'look out the window!', and you would do so without seeing anything remarkable, you would have an empty intention which awaits the satisfaction of fulfillment (*Erfüllung*) which the concrete perception of something peculiar or interesting could give. Yet this empty intention is not completely empty either; there is already a pattern of expectations in place, which Husserl later analyzes in detail in terms of consciousness's *horizonal structure* (see *Chapter 6*). Much as in this example, the distinction between empty and full acts is probably best understood as mixed in everyday experience in various degrees.

The exact sense in which signitive acts are empty can become clearer by contrasting them with the complete class of intuitive acts. The class of intuitive acts, on Husserl's view, includes all acts that are capable of giving *fullness* to empty signifying acts. Fullness here is best understood very generally as *giving something.* Intuitions *grasp* something, which is in turn to say that they relate to something with intuitive fullness. The prime example of an intuitive act is a simple perception. While a simple perception can certainly share matter (object-reference) with a mere empty signitive intention, the former nevertheless clearly involves something extra which the expression lacks. This peculiar *surplus* is the *fullness* or *representative content* of the perception. The fullness is not an act itself, but an act-moment next to the quality and matter. It is because of the fullness of intuitive acts that we say that through them we *grasp* the intended thing; we *behold* it itself, in its fullness, rather than having a mere empty expression of it.

We just took simple perception as the canonical example of an intuitive act. Because of that, it may now seem tempting to understand the fullness of intuition as the plain result of the sensory content which we take to be involved in perception. Intuition would subsequently be characterizable as a beholding of the thing itself simply because sensations put us in direct contact with it.[44] This would be somewhat in line with Kant's reading, where intuitions are always both sensible and immediate.

But fullness, on Husserl's account, is not due to sensations. Representative

[44] The expression 'thing itself' bears resemblance to the Kantian notion of 'thing in itself', but has little to do with it. In *Logical Investigations,* Husserl aims to develop a theory of intentionality that is metaphysically neutral. For that reason, it excludes questions concerning the Kantian thing in itself. This metaphysical neutrality changes, at least in *some* significant sense, after Husserl's transcendental turn, which I discuss in detail in *Chapter 5*. The expression 'thing itself' here serves only to denote a sense of immediacy with which objects can be presented in intuition.

content is in fact not exclusively a moment of acts of sensible intuition; we also have it in imagination. An imaginative act, on Husserl's view, also involves an intention which goes out and grasps something in degrees of fullness. If I ask the person next to me to think of my home town, s/he might entertain a purely signitive act with no representational fullness whatsoever. However, when I imagine my town, I *grasp* it imaginatively; I see buildings from this or that side, I imaginatively wander the streets, and so on. To be sure, simple perception has the character of pretending to give the *real* thing; it peculiarly claims not to stand in need of any further fulfillment (Husserl 1984, 589). This is not so with imagination. Yet it too provides a certain fullness which signitive acts lack (Husserl 1984, 646-647).[45]

Husserl thus insists that the capacity to provide fullness to signitive intentions – a capacity which defines intuitive acts in general – is not exclusive to simple perception. Imagination, although it certainly cannot provide the same kind of warrant as perception can, may also supply fullness to empty referring. Consequently, imagination can legitimately be called a type of intuitive act.

Simple and imaginative perception can, we have seen, provide fullness to signitive intentions. Closer scrutiny, however, reveals that they cannot in fact provide fullness to all types of signitive acts we are familiar with. One can, for instance, have an empty signitive intention of a state of affairs or a mathematical formula without thereby *grasping* it, *beholding* it itself in immediate proximity. One can perform an empty expressive act directed at the Pythagorean theorem, but one can also have an *intuition* of it – in the sense of an act which gives fullness, i.e. which gives the object itself, namely the ideal law in case, so that one beholds it directly, so to say, with the mind's eye, instead of emptily expressing it (Husserl 1984, 690-691). Acts expressive of universals can therefore also achieve fullness (or fail at that – clearly not all possible meaning-constructions can find actual fulfillment). We have, therefore, acts which can legitimately be called *intellectual intuitions*: acts of intending ideal objectivities which give the ideal matter itself to the mind's eye, which can subsequently bring fullness to corresponding empty expressive acts.[46]

The situation is slightly (or should I say even) more complicated for the fullness which corresponds to the expression of states of affairs. According to Husserl, simple perception does not give us states of affairs; it only gives us

[45] Something comparable goes for perceptions of images, maps, statues, and the like (Husserl 1984, 605-606), which involve perceptual fullness, but lack a claim of giving the real thing.

[46] For more on Husserl's concept of eidetic intuition, see especially Tieszen (1984).

objects – a view he consistently maintained and elaborated in later work (see *Chapter 7*). If we think of the state of affairs 'A is B', or 'either A or B', what shows in simple perception is 'A' and 'B' in each case. However, their relation – the 'is' and 'or' – cannot be simply seen. According to Husserl, simple perception proves incapable of providing fullness to categorial meaning intentions, since the relevant categorial relations cannot be simply seen.

To be sure, it would be phenomenologically inapt to suggest that simple perception gives us only completely isolated objects. Things always appear in their context, i.e. in a horizonal structure. But what matters here is only the fact that in simple seeing we directly and effortlessly grasp the thing, as in a single blow (Husserl 1984, 674). In other words, perception is a simple, non-founded act which immediately intends its object. This is not to deny that perception involves a continuous *fusion* of intentions as well. A single perceptual act inevitably gives its object from slightly different angles over the course of its temporally extended unfolding, and such part-intentions must be fused together passively to make the givenness of a single object possible. But this kind of fusion does not withstand that we are dealing here with a simple act which immediately relates to its object.

This straightforwardness of simple perception contrasts with the intuiting of states of affairs. One cannot simply and effortlessly grasp the state of affairs 'the mug is on the table', or 'the mug and the pen are black'. 'Being', 'conjunction', nor any other categorial relation is explicitly given in straightforward seeing. To bring the categorial relations themselves to explicit givenness demands a higher, founded act; an intellectual act which intuits the categorial relations simple sensible perception cannot bring to light.[47] Since these categorial forms are not sensibly given, Husserl conceives of them and of universals alike as 'objects' of a new sort, a kind of strictly 'super-sensuous' objects (Husserl 1984, 673). Consequently, to see '*that* things are thus and so' (McDowell 1996, 26) is for Husserl not possible as a simple perceptual act, but only as a higher categorial intuition.

Husserl's views on categorial and universal intuition are certainly rather unorthodox. It takes some serious effort to see the elegance of Husserl's attempt at an accurate phenomenological description and to appreciate its originality. Once one has understood the idea of empty meaning intentions, the opposing

[47] The distinction between straightforward and categorial intuition finds its parallel in imaginative intuitive acts. Here, too, we have sensuous and categorial intuitions, with again the only difference being that imagination does not have the character of giving the thing itself.

notion of 'intuitions' which bring fullness to those empty intentions by presenting the intended 'object' in a direct grasp should lose most of its oddities – even where such intuitions are of categorial or universal 'objects'. What is at stake in phenomenology is, ideally at least, only description, and certainly no far-fetched metaphysical implications ought to be implied therein.

This should conclude the discussions of this section. To sum up: in the sixth book of *Logical Investigations* Husserl distinguishes between signitive and intuitive acts. Whereas signitive intentions are for themselves mere empty expressive acts, intuitive acts are characterized by their capacity for giving the thing itself, thereby providing fullness (or failure of fullness, 'frustration') to signitive acts. Moreover, to different types of acts different kinds of intuitive fullness correspond, which is why Husserl also speaks of categorial and universal intuitions and objects.

### *3.2.3. Intuitive Fullness and Synthesis of Fulfillment*

The previous section addressed the difference between signitive and intuitive acts. The primary explanatory value of this distinction for epistemology has not, however, been explicitly dealt with yet. For Husserl, it lies not in the very distinction itself, but in the fact that both sides of it can somehow be brought together in experience. Phenomenologically speaking, both the acquisition and verification of knowledge takes shape as a kind of *coincidence* between both types of acts. In such a coincidence, the fullness of the intuitive act 'fulfills' the empty signitive act – which is why Husserl famously referred to it as a *synthesis of fulfillment*.

Intuitive acts, as the previous section revealed, are characterized by their capacity to provide fullness to signitive acts. This process of providing fullness may occur in several different ways. It is possible, for instance, first to have a simple perception, and to subsequently erect a meaning act upon that, as in saying '*this* is a blackbird'. In more usual cases, however, we start out with emptiness and move toward fullness. In other words, we first perform an empty meaning act which subsequently seeks to find fulfillment through intuition.

This happens, for instance, when one expects to hear a certain song being played (one has an empty anticipatory intention of a song which is fulfilled upon hearing the song), searches the house for one's car keys (one entertains an empty thought of the keys which awaits the satisfaction only a synthesis with a perceptual act of the keys can give), or tries to understand a technical notion in the work of a philosopher (one has an empty meaning-intention of the concept

of 'fulfillment' but its meaning is yet indeterminate). We here have different types of intentions with varying degrees of emptiness which seek fullness (or at the least are in anticipation of the very process through which they achieve either fullness or are definitively 'frustrated'). The same goes for the acquisition and verification of knowledge in science. Knowledge claims stand in need of intuitive warrant or evidence, which can only be provided by the fullness of intuitive acts in a successful synthesis of coincidence.

One might think it necessary for fulfillment to take place that the synthesis of coincidence between meaning and intuitive act itself becomes a reflective theme for consciousness. Husserl, however, rejects that idea. Instead, it is usually the object to which the attention goes out; it is identified and recognized as being there (intuited with fullness) just as it is (emptily) meant. Husserl further remarks that the coincidence does not involve both acts in their completeness. It is rather the act-matter (object-reference) which comes up for synthesis of recognition (Husserl 1984, 596). In fulfillment, the act-matter of the empty intention coincides with the act-matter of the intuition. Yet this act of recognition of the matter in fulfillment finds its basis specifically in the fullness of the intuitive act, which is in turn an act-moment next to quality and matter. As Husserl writes, it is 'only its [the intuitive act's] representative content [its fullness] which really assists the signitive act' (Husserl 1984, 619). So although the coincidence pertains to the matter, the intuitive warrant a successful coincidence may bring is specifically due to the fullness of the intuitive act.[48]

As I showed previously, Husserl thinks simple perception is not the only type of intuitive act capable of providing epistemic warrant to meaning acts. In fact, certain forms of synthetic fulfillment can only take place through 'super-sensuous', intellectual graspings of objects. The Pythagorean theorem, for instance, can never be fulfilled through any straightforward perception (because it is valid *a priori*); its essence can only be 'seen' in a universal intuition which grasps its ideal content. There are, then, various kinds of intuitive acts which can provide intuitive warrant for beliefs or signitive intentions. In other words, sensible intuition alone can never provide intuitive warrant for the various kinds of knowledge or beliefs we have.

In order to cover the full span of possible evidence intuitive acts can deliver to various sorts of signitive acts, Husserl introduces the new concept of the *epistemic*

[48] Interpretations on this matter vary in the literature. See also Bernet's (1985) reading, and particularly Hopp (2008a, 225-226) for an overview of some of the possible ways to interpret the concept of fulfillment.

*essence* of an act (Husserl 1984, 626). The epistemic essence of an act on Husserl's proposal plainly encompasses all that is relevant to its knowledge function. This amounts to the act's matter, quality, and the fullness or intuitive content of the act. An epistemic essence is therewith basically ascribed to all acts with intuitive content. As a result of this broad concept of intuition and of epistemic essence, perceptual intuitions are not privileged in providing epistemic warrant. Instead, for Husserl, any kind of intuitive fullness is a possible legitimate source of knowledge; a possible legitimate source of justification for a corresponding type of belief or meaning intention.

Generally conceived, then, intuitive acts provide epistemic warrant or evidence in case of a successful synthetic coincidence with a corresponding signitive act. Needless to say, there are various levels of such evidence, of better and worse intuitive warrant (Husserl 1984, 650-651). Ideally, however, there is a perfect coincidence of the act-matter of the signitive and the intuitive intention, whereby the latter's fullness completely fulfills the former's empty intention. Such perfect correspondence or adequate givenness is the case 'when the object meant is in the strict sense given in our intuition, and given as just what we think and call it' (Husserl 1984, 648).[49] This coincidence, Husserl thinks, is the phenomenological equivalent of correspondence in the traditional sense of meaning and thing; it is the *adequatio rei et intellectus* (Husserl 1984, 648).

### *3.2.4. Comparison of Phenomenological and Kantian Epistemology*

As I mentioned earlier, this second part of *Chapter 3* serves to extract two points of particular interest to us from Husserl's sixth book of *Logical Investigations*. The first is Husserl's original distinction between signitive and intuitive acts; the second his phenomenological account of knowledge acquisition and verification as a fulfillment that occurs in synthetic coincidence of both acts.

It is useful to briefly juxtapose this account to the Kantian model here, which McDowell also adopts to a certain extent, in order to see how their oppositions bear on questions concerning perception's conceptual content. I already mentioned that I doubt *Logical Investigations* is best suited to address the sort of conceptualism Kant and McDowell deal with. The question of the investment of perception with conceptual operations does not figure in Husserl's analyses of the structure of intentional acts and their synthetic coincidence. It is dealt with in

[49] See also Husserl (2004b, 144-148) for a similar exposition dating already from 1898.

much more detail in the later genetic work (see *Chapter 6* and *7*). In spite of this, some very interesting insights can be distilled here that do affect Husserl's relation to conceptualism and how the very question can be posed within his philosophical framework.

As Husserl fleetly notes in the sixth book, Kant's theory of knowledge is marked throughout by the failure to draw certain crucial oppositions clearly (Husserl 1984, 731-732). We can try to reconstruct briefly what Husserl has in mind here. To this end, let me first recall two of Kant's most creative ideas discussed in *Chapter 1*: (i) a separation of two stems of knowledge and (ii) the concept of synthesis. Kant's epistemology, as (i) suggests, is founded on the central distinction between sensibility and understanding. These two heterogeneous sources of knowledge must subsequently be used in cooperation for cognition to arise. Within this kind of understanding, epistemic warrant inevitably must find its source in sensible intuition. The famous Kantian phrase that 'thoughts without content are empty' in fact says little more than that conceptual formations without reference to sensible intuition are meaningless.

Husserl's phenomenological epistemology, by contrast, has no fundamental distinction between sensibility and understanding. Epistemic justification is here explicated in entirely synthetic terms, namely as a synthesis of coincidence between empty and full acts. Sensibility is not epistemologically privileged for its supposed status as a kind of gateway between thought and empirical reality. The idea that we would only have intuitions of a sensible kind is plainly a result from that metaphysical presumption, which determined Kant's thought through the course of modern empiricist epistemology. By accepting the ground distinction between sensibility and understanding, sensible intuition becomes prioritized in a theory of knowledge as the ultimate tribunal for our conceptual constructs to testify to. This, for Husserl, covers over the essential phenomenological kinship of sensible, imaginative, categorial, and universal intuition – to the extent that the latter three are not recognized at all.

The misrecognition of these forms of intuitive acts is thus in a way due, on Husserl's view, to the very distinction between sensibility and understanding. What ought to have been in place here, on Husserl's alternative account, is not two distinct faculties, but a distinction between intuitive and meaning acts. This fundamental misrecognition on Kant's behalf, Husserl notes, ultimately flows from Kant's desire to save the foundation of exact science from skepticism prior

to the attempt to establish a fundamental epistemology through a genuinely unbiased survey of the accomplishments of pure consciousness.[50]

Doubtlessly, this is the central departure Husserl makes from Kant's epistemology, indeed already in *Logical Investigations*. In short, from Husserl's viewpoint, Kant's distinction between sensibility and understanding prevents him from grasping the genuine phenomenological operations that underlie epistemic justification. This process involves the synthesis of a meaning act with a direct intuition of something given itself as it is, whether in sensible, categorial, or eidetic intuition. Kant's empiricist prejudices not only blocked him from grasping the true phenomenological structure of justification in terms of fullness and emptiness; it also prevented him from discovering the phenomenological method he himself implicitly adopted, especially in the A-Deduction.[51]

Much of Husserl's opposition to Kant can be transferred to McDowell, whose conceptualist theory rests on a Kantian distinction between two sources. Given this Kantian outlook, it is no surprise that the 'externalization' of the space of reasons in McDowell's philosophy is principally directed at perception or sensibility. Husserl, in addition, extends the space of responsiveness to reasons to include the contents of categorial, imaginative, and eidetic intuition. I return in more detail to Husserl's externalism in comparison to McDowell's in *Chapter 5*.

Another interesting point of comparison concerns the myth of the given. As discussed in *Chapter 2*, the notion of the myth of the given refers to the naturalistic fallacy to ascribe epistemic efficacy to bare sensations bridging our beliefs to an external reality. But Husserl's conceptual extension of intuition beyond sensible perception effectively minimalizes any threat of a commitment to the myth of the given. The phenomenological epistemology of the sixth book does not ascribe any special importance to sensations at all. Epistemic warrant is not a matter of sensations putting us in contact with the world, but of representative content or fullness, an act-moment not exclusively found in sensible perception but shared by all intuitive acts. Because of this entirely different scheme, the myth of the given is a far less urgent problem in

[50] I return in more detail to the importance of freedom from prejudice in phenomenology in *Chapter 5*.

[51] Admittedly this point is better developed on the basis of later writings (among others Husserl 2001, 170-174), where he claims that Kant misunderstood the (phenomenological) method of his own A-Deduction as subjective-psychological and therefore ended up rejecting it. Whether one finds this particular reading plausible or not, it seems Kant's analyses of synthesis in the first *Critique* do indeed lack a sustained methodology, as Breazeale (2015, 74-78) also developed in a recent contribution.

phenomenology generally than in traditional, empirically oriented epistemology.

As a final remark, it is worth recounting the motivation Kant and McDowell have for their conceptualist theories. In *Chapter 1*, I showed that Kant's first *Critique* is set up against a skepticism which fails to preserve apodicticity outside of analytic (tautological) certainty. Turning to our pure conceptual structuring of experience is Kant's elegant solution to this problem, because through it he can avoid the idea that pure concepts originate in perception – which would re-open the door to skepticism. Kant's motivation (to defeat skepticism) thus illuminates (a) why he *must* avoid a proper 'genesis' of pure concepts out of perceptual experience, and correlatively (b) why his category conceptualism must take shape as a top-down determination of perception through pure concepts.

*Chapter 2* showed that McDowell's conceptualist theory is not motivated by skepticism but by a certain state of oscillation. The oscillation at stake is, roughly, between a coherentism which allegedly cannot account for our touch with reality, and an empirical foundationalism which can but only at the cost of committing the fallacy of the given. Since McDowell does not partake in the Kantian defense of the *a priori* universality of natural laws, he certainly does not need Kant's category conceptualism. Instead, McDowell's motivation stems among others (i) a complicated picture of spaces of nature and reasons, (ii) the conviction that philosophy must show how the latter ties into the former without reducing it to it (the genesis of reasons through *Bildung,* based on a philosophical naturalism), and (iii) from his views on the sorts of things that can justify beliefs (only relations 'within the space of concepts' qualify (McDowell 1996, 7)). It is at least not obvious that Kant would accept any of these points, and therefore Kant does not need conceptualism in the form McDowell proposes it.

To be sure, Husserl's phenomenological account of consciousness is, much like Kant's, indebted to a struggle against skepticism regarding universality.[52] However, whereas Kant's struggle involves the need to avoid a genesis of pure concepts from sensible experience, which makes category conceptualism such an attractive option here, the following chapters will make clear that Husserl's framework does allow for a genesis of reason out of perceptual experience. This means, furthermore, that Husserl has no motivation to commit to a top-down determination of perception in order to ward off skepticism. In phenomenology, concepts and perception can determine each other in reciprocal ways, without

[52] Although the universality at stake here is not primarily that of natural laws, but of the very concept of ideality. See especially Husserl (1965) for an introductory text discussing Husserl's views on skepticism.

thereby undermining the idea of *a priori* necessity. I postpone theoretical discussions of these important issues until *Chapter 5*, while *Chapter 6* and *7* offer detailed discussions of Husserl's account of a genesis of reason that goes beyond reason itself.

To summarize the results of this section: Husserl's account of justification in terms of syntheses of different acts provides an alternative to the Kantian separation of concept and intuition. On Husserl's view, the Kantian dichotomy is the result of a bias which stems from the empiricist tradition, whereas his own account is taken to be the result of pure phenomenological description. This fundamental departure bears on issues regarding the myth of the given, the externalization of the space of reasons, and the problem of a genesis of reason. These points will all be revisited in discussions in following chapters.

### *3.2.5. Concluding Remarks*

In this chapter I discussed Husserl's theory of intentionality in the fifth and sixth book of *Logical Investigations*. With regard to the fifth book, I specifically focused on Husserl's account of feeling acts and sensations. I showed that although Husserl thinks feelings can play a role in founded acts, whereby they become intentionally related to an object, the sensations for themselves belong to a fundamentally different class of really inherent contents. They can function as building blocks of intentional acts, but they are never themselves intentional. In *Logical Investigations,* Husserl does not clarify the relations between such building blocks and the acts which they build any further. I suggested that this account of sensations yields some notion of non-conceptual content which likely does not fall prey to the myth of the given, but whose exact place in a theory of knowledge is admittedly not at its clearest here.

Regarding the sixth book, I discussed Husserl's account of signitive and intuitive acts and the possibility of a synthesis of fulfillment between them. My main claims concerned how this framework contrasts with the Kantian model employed by the most prominent conceptualists. Most important here is Husserl's broadening of the class of intuitive acts, the principle of fullness which defines them, and their function of fulfilling meaning intentions. I showed that this allows for a very different understanding of knowledge acquisition and justification, and that it affects how problems of non-conceptual content and the myth of the given apply within phenomenology.

# Chapter 4. Intentionality in *Ideas I*

*Chapter summary*
In this chapter I develop a reading of intentionality as Husserl construes it in *Ideas I* (1913). In the first part, I focus on the general structure of intentionality, with its noesis/noema-structure and hyletic components. I use this outline to argue that Husserl's positing of hyle involves a commitment to non-conceptual contents and that his motivations for this are shared by some analytic philosophers today. In the second part, I discuss whether Husserl's remarks on the expressibility of the noema indicate a form of weak conceptualism and question the epistemic efficacy of non-conceptual content within Husserl's transcendental phenomenology.

## 4.1. The General Structure of Intentionality

### *4.1.1. Introduction and Overview of the Chapter*

In this chapter I focus on the structure of intentionality as Husserl exposes it in *Ideas I* in relation to debates about non-conceptual content.[53] In *Ideas I*, Husserl first inaugurates phenomenology as a foundational science that is to offer a final clarification of all possible knowledge, truth, and being. The way it does so is by describing how things are manifest in experience. I discuss the precise nature of the philosophical commitments that enable Husserl to make claim to such a grandiose transcendental project in *Chapter 5*. Most of the discussions of intentionality in this chapter can, by contrast, be read as more or less neutral in respect of phenomenology's transcendental ambitions.

Husserl believed different types of object-awareness demand different intentional analysis. There are specific descriptive analyses required for awareness of imaginary objects, objects of judgments, objects of perception, and so on. This is because, in each of these cases, there are essential differences in the structures of what one is conscious of and how one is conscious of it. At the same time, however, there is also a kind of fundamental structure undergirding all these intentional relations. There is, one could say, a universal structure of intentionality, which applies equally to all being conscious of. It is in particular this universal structure of intentionality that I address in this chapter, which for Husserl consists of four central constituents: the *hyle, noesis, ego,* and *noema*.

[53] Some parts of this chapter have been published in *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* in an article named 'Some reflections on Husserlian intentionality, intentionalism, and non-propositional contents', see Van Mazijk (2016c).

My overall aim in this chapter is to offer an exposition of these four notions and to subsequently relate them to discussions on non-conceptual content. Although the account this yields is not radically different with respect to our purposes from the one discussed in *Chapter 3,* it does contain some new insights. First, in the following section, I show that intentionality for Husserl (i) only covers a *region* of conscious contents, namely those that involve a relation between act-processes and presented content. Put differently, intentionality for Husserl concerns broadly the conscious life of the subject, just as it did in *Logical Investigations.* This means the structure of intentionality, as a directedness toward an object, is not necessarily suited to describe more passive, associative syntheses – which nonetheless play an important role in Husserl's (particularly later) views on perception and knowledge – as will come to prominence in *Chapter 6* and *7*.

Second, this chapter argues that (ii) Husserl's account of intentionality involves non-conceptual content on the side of the act-processes (the *noesis*). More specifically, I show that Husserl's notion of hyletic data – which is similar to the notion of sensations in *Logical Investigations* – involves a commitment to non-conceptual content of a sort also accepted by a number of prominent analytic philosophers today.

Third, I argue that (iii) Husserl subscribes to non-conceptual content on the side of the presented content (the *noema*) as well, but also that the noema always contains a core which is propositionally explicable. In other words, the core of any presented content can be regarded as (weakly) conceptual, but from a phenomenological viewpoint, even the presented content is never entirely 'fit to figure in discursivity' (McDowell 2009, 265).

Fourthly, I briefly discuss (iv) whether the kinds of non-conceptual content discussed should be considered epistemically efficacious or not, something which *Logical Investigations* did not provide a very clear answer to (see *Chapter 3*). To answer this, I illustrate that Husserl's phenomenological approach to the perception-judgment relation does not neatly fit contemporary discussions about epistemic warrant. At the same time, Husserl's analyses certainly are not extra-epistemological either. I conclude that they belong to something I call *transcendental-phenomenological epistemology*, which comes prior to the sorts of discussions on belief justification central to contemporary discussions. The precise meaning of this transcendental dimension of phenomenology will be one of the main concerns of *Chapter 5*.

### *4.1.2. Really Inherent and Intended Contents: Hyle, Noesis, Ego, and Noema*

In *Ideas I*, Husserl notes that 'intentionality' is an essential feature of those experiences that fall within the scope of 'objectively oriented' phenomenology. Put differently, 'intentionality is what characterizes consciousness in the *pregnant* sense' (Husserl 1983, 199 my italics), that means: it characterizes the life of the 'ego-subject' which comports itself toward the world. At the same time, Husserl notes that 'we cannot say of each experience that it has intentionality'. Intentionality, therefore, unlike with contemporary intentionalist theories (Byrne 2001, Crane 2003, 2009, and others), denotes a specific characteristic of a certain *domain* of contents, namely those that involve a directedness toward or aboutness of something.

As in *Logical Investigations,* intentionality is understood as the feature of directedness that is essential to all conscious acts. Husserl endorses quite a broad notion of such being directed toward, one which does not restrict it solely to 'actualized' ego-acts (Husserl 1983, 201). For instance, one can, on the one hand, effect an act of wishing or perceiving right now. An intentional act is then actualized by means of which the ego-subject is conscious of something. But, on the other hand, it is also possible for acts to remain in a state of uneffected potentiality; that is, they may remain to stir in the background without becoming actualized by the ego-subject. For instance, a loud car is passing by, but one does not completely 'give in' to the strong tendency to turn one's attention toward it. In such cases, Husserl maintains that there still is a 'consciousness of something', i.e. an intentional relation, although arguably in a new sense, for there is no object explicitly brought into the attentive field of the ego-subject, and there is thus properly speaking no ego-act effected which actualizes an intentional relation to an object.

Intentionality thus refers to a certain directedness or aboutness, which Husserl claims is an essential trait of consciousness in the pregnant sense. Especially the concept of directedness clearly involves a reference to two sides: there is the *something* directed at and the *act* performing the directing. For Husserl, intentionality is essentially a two-sided relation. It does not merely include the contents that are being presented, or the meaning that is made available. It also refers to the side of the ego-subject and the experiential processes and contents there.

What goes for intentionality also goes for the concept of content. Husserl thinks there are two fundamentally different ways in which we can speak of conscious content. These are called the *really inherent contents* (on the subjective

act-side) and *presented contents*, i.e. that which is intended.[54]

Both the really inherent and the presented content are considered by Husserl as abstract 'moments' of the intentional relation. The concept of moment has a technical signification in Husserl's mereology (the logic of parts and wholes), developed in the third book of *Logical Investigations*. Unlike independent parts, moments are dependent on the whole. The leg of a chair is an independent part of the chair, but its color is an abstract moment (it cannot exist independently of its chair-substrate). The really inherent and presented content stand to the intentional relation the way color stands to its object. In what follows, I will first deal with the really inherent content as moment of the intentional relation, which is arguably a more elusive concept than that of the presented content. On Husserl's account in *Ideas I,* the really inherent content can in turn be further subdivided into two concepts: the hyle and the *noesis*.[55]

Intentionality, considered as a relation of directedness consisting of two abstract and mutually dependent moments, is peculiarly founded by something intrinsically non-intentional. Husserl calls this the hyle or hyletic data. According to Husserl, it concerns broadly the 'sensation-contents' of consciousness such as color-data, sound-data, and the like (Husserl 1983, 203). The hyle, then, basically replaces Husserl's talk of sensations in *Logical Investigations*. As in that earlier work, Husserl notes here that the hyle for itself has '*nothing pertaining to intentionality*' (Husserl 1983, 203). The contents that we are directed at through intentional acts – the presented contents – can only come about once the hyle is 'animated' through various activities of consciousness, an animation Husserl often refers to as a 'sense-endowing'. The hyle is thus basically the 'stuff-stratum' which is animated by the act-processes. By itself, however, the hyle is neither an act-process nor a presented content. At least considered in abstract isolation, the hyle must be said to be insufficient to represent anything, i.e. it is non-representational, because it is 'purely' sensory.

In contemporary debates, the term 'phenomenal content' is often ambiguous between expressing (for instance) the color red as perceived property of an object and the color red as impressing datum.[56] Put differently, there is on the one hand the supposedly pure qualitative aspect of the impression red or a pain sensation,

[54] Another way to speak of this opposition is in terms of immanence and transcendence.

[55] In *Ideas I*, Husserl introduces noesis and hyle separately as distinct notions. However, in a footnote (Husserl 1983, 213) dating from 1922, it is noted that the hyle is a component of the noesis. I will not go into these details any further.

[56] See also Lycan (2006) for more on that ambiguity.

while on the other hand there is also the intentionally animated 'seeing a red apple' or 'feeling toothache'. In *Ideas I*, and again in line with the fifth book of *Logical Investigations,* Husserl makes room for a similar distinction. Here, Husserl restricts the notion of hyle to the sensuous impression, while locating the perceived property 'red' on the side of the presented content. The color red must therefore be said to have a double meaning in phenomenology: it is non-intentional as a hyletic datum, while at the same time it is part of the intentional content insofar as it is represented as a property of an object intended (Husserl 1983, 237).

This apparent doubling of the phenomenal content 'red' could perhaps lead to skepticism whether it is necessary to posit hyletic data altogether. For one, in reflecting on an ongoing perception of a red apple, does one really find something other than the redness that is a property of the represented apple? Is there an additional sensation-datum 'red' which is not represented but nevertheless part of consciousness in another sense? Those today who adhere to the so-called 'transparency thesis' – roughly the idea that introspection reveals nothing more to us than intentional contents, thus making a description of consciousness exhaustible in terms of its represented contents – would argue so, for instance Loar (1990) and Tye (2002). Given the prominence of the transparency thesis in contemporary debates, it would seem the burden of proof is on Husserl to show that phenomenological description does reveal something like non-representational hyletic data.

First, we may note that from phenomenological angles, too, Husserl has been criticized for his positing of utterly un-animated hyle.[57] Critics have taken it as a theoretical abstraction from phenomenological reflection.[58] With respect to that objection, it should be noted that already in *Ideas I* Husserl explicitly remarks that the concern over the possibility of un-animated hyle is 'not to be decided here' (Husserl 1983, 204). Husserl, then, does not actually claim that upon reflection on lived experience one could find something like pure sense data. In later works, moreover, Husserl appears to become more sensitive to the internal structure of

[57] I will not go into detail here, but see McKenna (1984) and Marcelle (2011) for overviews or Gurwitch (2010) for an early critique.

[58] Smith (1977) argues that hyletic data are by definition inaccessible by way of reflection. Some other scholars have suggested that hyle is Husserl's way of positing an interface between consciousness and reality. As Hintikka puts it, the hyle is like 'an actual interface or overlap of my consciousness and reality'; 'what is immediately given to me will then at the same time be part of the mind-independent reality and an element of consciousness' (Hintikka 1995, 82). Clearly this is not a reading I subscribe to (see *Chapter 3* on sensations and fullness).

hyletic data, addressing their synthetic unity in terms of 'fields of sense' (Husserl 1997a, 72-76, see also *Chapter 6*). But the question remains pressing nonetheless: if reflection on actual experience only reveals (say) the color as object-property and not as (field of) hyletic data on the really inherent side, then what warrants the latter's positing?

To understand Husserl's position, one should first make Husserl's distinction between really inherent content and presented content more clear. Husserl maintains that the expression 'content of consciousness' can mean two very different things. On the one hand, there are the contents of consciousness in the sense in which the intentionalist nowadays speaks of them. Here, content means what is presented or made available. But according to Husserl, there are also contents which 'really inhere' in consciousness. Such really inherent contents are a necessary part of any experience as much as the intentional fillings of that state are, even though we are not directed at them. The hyle, on account of *Ideas I*, belongs to this side of real inherence.

So what could warrant the defense of hyletic 'really inhering' contents? I think a number of philosophers today in fact follow the sorts of insights that motivated Husserl's positing of hyle. Crane (1988, 1992) is not far from Husserl in his discussions of the Müller-Lyer and waterfall illusions. Crane, as I also discussed in *Chapter 2,* argues that for explaining the Müller-Lyer illusion, we need to posit two levels of representation that take place simultaneously, one consciously intended to (we see two differently sized lines), the other not (we are exposed to lines of equal length). Also, Dretske's (1995) distinction between 'systemic' and 'acquired' representations, discussed earlier in *Chapter 3,* proves a very similar point.

Crane and Dretske both maintain that the non-conceptual representations involved in their examples are representational. In that respect they differ from Husserl, who takes hyle as part of the really inherent rather than the (re-)presented content. Peacocke (2002), on the other hand, does defend non-conceptual non-representational contents. Consider the following fragment:

> Imagine you are in a room looking at a corner formed by two of its walls. The walls are covered with paper of a uniform hue, brightness and saturation. But one wall is more brightly illuminated than the other. In these circumstances, your experience can represent both walls as being the same colour: it does not look to you as if one of the walls is painted with brighter paint than the other. Yet it is equally an aspect of your visual experience itself that the region of the visual field in which one wall is presented is brighter than that in which the other is presented (Peacocke 2002, 274).

Peacocke's point is similar to the ones made by Dretske and Crane. Unlike the latter, however, Peacocke formulates the point in terms of non-representational contents, which makes his position virtually identical to Husserl's.

It is worth noting that Peacocke's and Husserl's commitment need not contradict the fact that we never encounter these non-representational contents directly upon reflection, as the transparency thesis suggests. For any such encounter would, on Husserl's account, presuppose an 'animation' of the non-representational data. Put differently, we cannot be directed at hyletic data without turning them into representational or presented contents that we intend. But that, so this account suggests, should not force us to deny their existence.

On Husserl's views in *Ideas I*, the hyletic data of sensation are non-independent moments of perceptual experiences. They are intrinsic to intentional acts of perception, but can be understood independently from them only in abstraction (which is why, *for themselves,* they have nothing pertaining to intentionality). Committing to non-independent hyletic content does not amount to a metaphysical postulation or naturalistic fallacy as some critics have suggested. Hyle is not outside of pure consciousness, i.e. it is not empirical psychological content.[59] As the accounts by Crane, Dretske, and Peacocke show, the motivations for Husserl's positing of hyle are in fact still shared by a number of analytic philosophers today.

One advantage of Husserl's own account of hyletic data is that no reference to cases of illusion or misrepresentation is required to discover them. For example, Husserl maintains that any ordinary visual perception involves the presentation of a three-dimensional object. But at the same time, it must be said that only one side or dimension of that presented object is directly given at any moment of experience. Although I intend the object as a whole, what is directly given at any particular moment in time is quite literally 'impressed' upon consciousness, including all accompanying sensory content, color moments, etc. Even though a less sophisticated exercise of introspection might only reveal the whole object as it is intended, a proper phenomenological description, Husserl maintains, would be incomplete without an account of these real contents directly impressed upon consciousness.

Another advantage of Husserl's account is that it can easily be extended beyond the paradigm case of visual acts. Acts of touch, for instance, also

[59] Psychology is an empirical discipline, and since there is no empirical dimension to pure phenomenology, the hyle must be understood as being entirely "subjective', […] the Ego's first '*subjective possession*" (Husserl 2000, 226)

necessarily involve hyletic strata. In touching a roughly surfaced object, or in feeling a burning pain on my upper arm, I do not *just* have the intentional object 'rough object' or 'pain on my upper arm'. By their very essence, acts of perception involve a non-conceptual hyletic stratum of sensations. In letting my hand run over a rough surface, I might intend the intentionally animated feature of the object (the *rough* object), but the *same* sensations that are animated as features of the intended object are simultaneously *my* sensations, indexing me as the one who is touched or touching (Husserl 2000, 229). There is, phenomenologically speaking, no getting rid of this beetle in the box entirely. Communally shareable (or so constituted) or not, according to Husserl it simply is a phenomenological fact that non-conceptual hyletic data are involved in all forms of perceptual intentionality.

As the previous shows, the notion of hyle Husserl subscribes to in his static phenomenology is not a collection of bare sensory data for which no phenomenological evidence can be given. The fact that in itself it has 'nothing pertaining to intentionality' does not imply we cannot discover it upon reflection. It is further worth noting that when Husserl says that the possibility of un-animated hyle is 'not to be decided here [in *Ideas I*]' (Husserl 1983, 204), he most likely is *not* saying he has not made up his mind about this issue. Already in *Thing and Space* (1907), Husserl notes that the hyletic data too 'are not dispersed and without connection; they have a rigorous unity and a rigorous form' (Husserl 1997c, 57). There is, therefore, some evidence that the early Husserl already took hyletic data as non-conceptual and non-representational (so not on the side of the intended content, but really inhering in consciousness instead) without thereby denying that they are pre-structured.

One might think it is contradictory to suggest that hyletic data are pre-structured while not being the product of intentionally animating acts. However, this can only seem contradictory if intentional animation – understood as the form/content-model of apprehension, by which noesis endows hyle with sense – is taken as the only form of meaning-giving known to consciousness. Sokolowski (1964) influentially suggested that the early Husserl only operated with the form/content-model, i.e. the noetic animation of hyletic data, which he then rejected after his work on time consciousness (mostly in the 1910s). On this reading, Husserl's static phenomenology commits to an unanimated hyle, but Husserl soon came to revise this in the genetic phase.

But the fragments quoted from *Thing and Space* contradict Sokolowksi's reconstruction. Furthermore, Husserl's remark that hyle for itself has 'nothing

pertaining to intentionality' need not be taken to exclude the possibility of a *pre*-intentional (pre-noetic) structuring of the hyle. In other words, Husserl can consistently maintain that hyletic data are non-representational (do not inherently present an object) without suggesting that they lack all structure. This is indeed how I think things stand for Husserl. I think it is plausible to suggest that the primary reason Husserl did not elaborate much on the pre-structuring of hyletic data in the static phase is that static phenomenology is predominantly concerned with the active life of the ego and the sorts of accomplishments which are constitutive of objective reality and corresponding scientific activity. This, indeed, Husserl came to view differently in his genetic phase, which led him to shift focus to pre-intentional sense-making – analyses which greatly deepened his understanding of hyletic content (see *Chapter 6*).

So far for the notion of hyle. Apart from it, there is another essential type of real (and thus non-intended to, i.e. non-representational) content Husserl distinguishes in *Ideas I*: the *noesis*. Just like the hyle, the noesis is said to belong to consciousness as '*components proper*', as opposed to the presented contents which are not components proper but part of consciousness as '*intentional correlates*' (Husserl 1983, 213). One way to explain the noesis is to say that it concerns those aspects of the experience that pertain broadly to the 'subjective side'. Noesis contains everything that belongs to the act-processes which 'animate' the hyletic data, thereby endowing them with noematic (intended-to) sense (which in turn does not belong to noesis).

More concretely, noesis involves things like modes of givenness or 'act-qualities' – perceptual, judgmental, evaluative, imaginative, etc. Also, 'doxic modalities'– the sense of position-taking toward a presented content as something that one believes to exist or not – are part of the noesis. For one, a hallucinatory object does not have the same doxic modality as a perceived object; only the latter is posited as actually existing. This point has more recently been emphasized by among others Martin (2002) and Stoljar (2007), but it has been familiar in phenomenology for over a century. Furthermore, noesis contains the directions of regard of the ego-subject to the objects it intends and the degrees of ego-awareness or being-awake of the ego (Husserl 1983, 114). These distinctions allow one to e.g. memorize and imagine the same intended object, or to doubt and affirm the same intended object, etc.

It is important to note that this characterization of act-processes as giving shape to how one apprehends an intended object does not serve to suggest that the presented content is actually identical in all respects over the various possible

changes in noesis. Husserl thinks that what is intentionally presented in perceiving an object has a different structure from what is apprehended in imagining the very same object. It is never *just* the mode of givenness which changes; through it the presentation of the object itself also changes. Likewise, an increase of ego-attention in a perception usually influences the details of the presented content, even though the same object is perceived. Doxic changes on the side of noesis also affect in their own way what one intends. Husserl thus allows for noetic changes to be *reflected* on the side of the presented content (Husserl 1983, 243). To say that one can imagine and perceive the same intended object does not, then, amount to saying that the presented content is in both cases identical in all respects.

This point is worth stressing because it is a common line of thought among intentionalists today to specify intentionality solely in terms of the represented content.[60] One central argument driving this theory is that since supposed act-processes are mirrored in representational contents anyhow, there is really no need to appeal to act-processes (e.g. Lycan 2006).[61] Put differently, any difference in how one apprehends an object is a difference in how that object is represented. If such an exclusively representational understanding of intentionality has its own practical or theoretical benefits, then I do not think Husserl would necessarily have to object to that. From a phenomenological viewpoint, however, the fact that noetic aspects are mirrored in the presented content does not imply that the act-processes are reducible to the latter. Descriptive phenomenology abides by the distinction between act-processes and presented contents – at least where 'consciousness in the pregnant sense' is concerned.

The noesis thus broadly covers all the act-processes of intentional directedness, that is, all the subjective processes that give shape to *how* one

[60] There are a number of views in contemporary philosophy of mind that also refer to intentionality, including Byrne (2001), Crane (1998, 2003, 2007), Marcus (2007), and Stoljar (2007). Although there are certain similarities, intentionalism cannot be equated with Husserl's intentionality. Intentionalism is according to many identical to representationalism, which is also endorsed by Harman (1990), Dretske (1995), Tye (1995, 2002), Shoemaker (1998, 2000), Lycan (2001, 2006), Schellenberg (2011), Seager and Bourget (2007), and Bourget (2015) among others. I have addressed commonalities and differences between such views and Husserl's elsewhere (Van Mazijk 2016c), but I will not go into them here.

[61] See especially Lycan's (2006) treatment of Nickel's (2006) argument for non-conceptual content for a nice example of how representationalists try to reduce all content into representational content.

apprehends a presented content. With regard to noesis, it is worth pointing to a further necessary moment of intentionality: *the ego*. Husserl thinks any experience in the pregnant sense has an ego which lives in the act and which is intending the presented content. The ego-subject can be more or less present, actively engaging or 'sleeping' – a degree of presence which correlates with noetic 'degrees of attention' (Husserl 1983, 222-226). Husserl considers the degree of ego-participation or ego-attention, as is particularly clear from his later work, as strongly determinative of the structure of the presented content which is the 'end-product' of the processes of noetic animation. For one, objects of judgment can only be brought about with active ego-participation – a kind of 'will to knowledge' or 'voluntary participation' on its behalf (Husserl 1997a, 198) – whereas different kinds of perceptual contents by their essence correlate to different degrees of a merely awake or sleeping ego.

Generally speaking, the noesis, or that which 'really inheres' in consciousness, is considered by Husserl a 'multiplicity', over against the presented content, which is characterized particularly by 'unity' (Husserl 1983, 242). A peculiarity now follows, namely insofar as the ego-pole seems to belong to the side of noesis (it is clearly not intended *at* – it is that *which* intends) while simultaneously being a kind of unity in the stream of experience. The ego-pole is not in perpetual change: it is one and the same ego-pole which correlates to the noema. The ego-pole is thus, it seems, a unique kind of *really inhering unity*, a status which arguably sets it apart from both noesis and noema.

Lastly, the outcome of what happens on the really inherent side, which consisted of the hyle as unanimated data and the various act-processes animating it, is called the *noema*. The noema is described by Husserl generally as the object as it is intended or simply as the presented content. Unlike the hyle and the act-processes, the noema is not really inherent in consciousness; it instead belongs to consciousness as intentional correlate, i.e. it is that which one is conscious of precisely in the way in which one is conscious of it.

It is worth distinguishing between at least two notions of the noema. First, the term noema can point to the identical object given in an intentional experience. As Husserl remarks, 'there is inherent in each noema a pure object-something as a point of unity' (Husserl 1983, 314). Any intentional directedness, Husserl maintains, relates to a 'something', a 'determinable X' which is the bearer of predicates and which remains identical over the course of any perspectival changes (Husserl 1983, 315). This determinable X is is an expressible, i.e. a weakly conceptual content. Indeed, any noema, Husserl notes, 'is expressible by

means of significations', that is, through meaning-acts (Husserl 1983, 295, also 319-320), and every act that is not itself objectifying 'allows objectivities to be drawn from itself' by a 'change of attitude' (Husserl 2000, 18).

Second, the noema can also be understood as a 'full core', which for Husserl denotes the object exactly as it is given in a concrete experience. We here have, on the one hand, the 'object in the how of its determinations', that is, the object precisely as it is meant with all its finer determinations. Such determinations may change (for instance as one walks around an object) even though the intended object-pole (the determinable X) remains identical. On the other hand, we also have the 'object in the how of its modes of givenness', which includes degrees of clarity and obscurity in which an object is intended (Husserl 1983, 314-316). One can thus intend one and the same object at different times with changing determinations while it may also appear differently depending on whether it is given obscurely or clearly. With respect to this fuller notion of noema, the objective, determinable X is, Husserl maintains, only a 'sort of *abstract* form' (Husserl 1983, 316). In other words, the full noema bears an objective relation in itself (Husserl 1983, 308), but it is not exhausted by it.

At least within Husserl's transcendental-phenomenological framework, which knows of no objects beyond what is for consciousness, the noema cannot be radically external to consciousness.[62] At the same time, this does not suggest that intentionality is a directedness toward internal mental objects.[63] Also, it does not imply a commitment to a notion of internal representational content. Husserlian phenomenology avoids theoretically constructed notions such as representation; it only purports to describe how things reveal themselves. Rather than speaking of representational content, it is thus better to take the full noema as the

[62] The exact status of the noema has seen considerable debate over the past decades (Føllesdal 1969, McIntyre and Smith 1989, Willard 1992, Mohanty 1992, Drummond 1992, 2009, Zahavi 2004, 2008a). Although I cannot elaborate the point here, it is my view that Husserl's transcendental idealism does not consider intentional objects to be radically separate from consciousness. In this respect at least, Husserl's position appears to differ from Crane (2009), who has a more realist take on intentional objects – even though he claims to side with Husserl on the issue.

[63] Husserl's concept of intentionality as a being directed toward transcendent objects also bears on discussions on intentional inexistence and the problem of intending non-existent objects. For Husserl, intentionality is not a relation between a subject and empirical facts of the objective environment but rather a directedness that is inherent to consciousness itself. I cannot discuss this issue in detail here, but see Moran (2000, 43-48), Crane (2006) and Kriegel (2007) for some recent discussions on intentional inexistence.

presented content in its complete 'fineness of grain'. The presented content, as that which one intends, thus opposes the really inherent contents and act-processes which are (disregarding special cases of phenomenological reflection) not presented to the ego-subject.

## 4.2. Non-Conceptual Content and Non-Conceptual Justification

### *4.2.1. Introduction*

In the previous section I offered an overview of the general structure of intentionality as it appears in *Ideas I*. Along the way I defended broadly three claims of interest to debates about non-conceptual content. First, (i) Husserl presents intentionality as a *relation* or *directedness* which covers a *region* of conscious contents, namely those that characterize consciousness in the pregnant sense. Second, (ii) on the act-side of this relation, we find a notion of hyletic data which involves a commitment to non-conceptual content of a sort also accepted by some contemporary philosophers. Third, (iii) there is inherent in each presented content (noema) an identical point of unity. This so-called 'determinable X' is an expressible content.

In this second part I want to look in more detail at the kind of presented contents intentionality makes available to the subject. First, in the following section, I elaborate the claim that even though Husserl accepts that intentional acts yield a propositionally explicable core on the noematic side, he need not accept that the structure of the presented content is entirely (weakly) conceptual. Second, I consider whether the non-conceptual structures addressed are to be considered epistemically relevant or not. It has recently been suggested by Hopp (2008b) that phenomenological structures of the sort I am addressing here are constitutive of experiential states involving justification but are not for that reason epistemologically efficacious. As Hopp puts it, they are *ontologically* but not *epistemologically* founding contents (Hopp 2008b, 200). Although there might be some sense to the distinction, I argue that Husserl's phenomenological program is best understood as not so much concerned with the kind of epistemological justification Hopp has in mind when he introduces this distinction, but with a kind of transcendental clarification that should come prior to that.

### *4.2.2. On the Potentiality to Bring Acts to Expression*

In *Logical Investigations,* as *Chapter 3* showed, Husserl reconsidered the Kantian separation of sensibility and understanding in terms of signitive and intuitive acts. On the basis of this account, Husserl subsequently argued that not only acts of simple perception are capable of providing epistemic warrant for beliefs. Instead, any intuitive act can do so – including imaginative, categorial, and universal acts. As Husserl further noted at the opening of the sixth book of *Logical Investigations,* such intuitive acts essentially involve a directed at something, and this object of directedness is by rule expressible through meaning acts.

This line of thought regarding the expressibility of intuitive acts is further elaborated in *Ideas I* and *II*. Any noematic sense, Husserl writes in *Ideas I*, 'is expressible by means of significations' (Husserl 1983, 295). Again, in *Ideas II*, it is said that '*every non-objectivating act* allows objectivities to be drawn *from itself*' (Husserl 2000, 18). Passing from 'just being conscious' to 'the theoretical performance of this act' is possible by a '*change of attitude*, [which] *belongs*, *as an ideal possibility, to all acts*'. And Husserl continues: 'all acts which are not already theoretical from the outset allow of being converted into such acts by means of a change in attitude' (Husserl 2000, 9-10).

What Husserl is saying here is that it belongs as an ideal possibility to any intentional act that a modification takes place by which the act is converted into a theoretical act, one accompanied by a theoretical interest of a thinking subject. *Prima facie* this idea does not sound altogether different from the weak conceptualism I ascribed to McDowell in *Chapter 2*. Weak conceptualism primarily argues for perception's *openness* to judgment, such that perceptual contents fit within the space of reasons. Indeed, if this openness is all it means for a content to be conceptual, i.e. for it to contain a certain relation to an object which is 'expressible by means of significations' (Husserl 1983, 295), then it should be granted that on Husserl's account *all intentional contents*, perceptual or otherwise, have conceptual content.

Nevertheless it is useful to remind ourselves of at least three restrictions here. First, as discussed previously, Husserl terminologically restricts the notion of act to performances emanating from the ego living in the experience (consciousness in the 'pregnant' sense). This notion of act involves seeing things, meeting other people, listening to music, and so on, and applies equally to all act-qualities (perceiving, imagining, etc.). But neither in *Logical Investigations* nor in *Ideas I* does the notion of act exhaust conscious life. It is therefore not implied that the entire meaningful life of consciousness can be converted into rationally scrutinizing acts. What can be so transformed is, ideally speaking, any act in which the ego

*already* partakes to some extent.

Second, Husserl does not submit that it is practically possible to convert any or all actualized acts into theoretical acts. He only says it is an ideal possibility. Clearly, a theoretical ego cannot accompany the whole of the intentional life all of the time. Moreover, it need not be an actual possibility in all cases. For one, situations that involve overwhelming sensations or emotions may not allow for rational scrutiny (including phenomenological reflection, in fact) at the time of their actualization.

Third, we have seen that Husserl specifies the object-directedness as a structure *within* the noema.[64] It is not, therefore, the entire noema which necessarily allows for conceptual explication through so-called meaning-acts (see *Chapter 2*). As I argued previously, changes on the really inherent side of consciousness are reflected on the noematic side as well. Blurred vision, objects in shadow, and certain visual illusions are good examples of changes in the hyletic content of a perceptual act. Importantly, such changes affect the intentional contents of acts as well. What we see is an object *as* appearing blurred although not *being* blurred or an object *as* appearing in different color shades but not *having* different color shades. This means that we do experience these non-conceptual contents of experience in some way, even if they are not themselves the direct object of the act.

This should conclude this section on the expressibility of intentional content through meaning-acts on Husserl's account in *Ideas I*. Although acts are essentially convertible into theoretical acts which give expression to the object the act relates to – which means all presented contents are weakly conceptual to just that extent – this does not necessarily imply that everything on the side of the presented content can be expressed.

### *4.2.3. Non-Conceptual Justification*

So far, this chapter focused on outlining Husserl's theory of intentionality in *Ideas I* and varieties of non-conceptual content found therein. In this section, I want to raise the question whether these contents should be regarded as being epistemologically efficacious.

For McDowell in *Mind and World*, to ascribe epistemological efficacy to non-

[64] This view differs from certain interpretations of Husserl prevalent mostly among so-called 'west coast readers'. See for instance Føllesdal (1969) and Shim (2005) for two alternative readings of the difficult notion of noema.

conceptual content amounts to committing the fallacy of the myth of the given. As McDowell puts it, 'if experiences are extra-conceptual, they cannot be what thoughts are rationally based on' (McDowell 1996, 68). This is because McDowell is convinced that one 'cannot really understand the relations in virtue of which a judgment is warranted except as relations within the space of concepts' (McDowell 1996, 7). Therefore, if we submit that non-conceptual contents have any direct role to play in justifying beliefs, we block ourselves from understanding what thoughts are based on.

McDowell's above remark about 'relations within the space of concepts' seems indicative of what I earlier called hard conceptualism. This expresses the idea that only concepts can provide warrant for belief states – a view which, it seems, cannot but digress into some form of coherentism or infinitism. However, most of the places – in *Mind and World* and elsewhere – where McDowell explicitly defines conceptualism do not indicate hard conceptualism. Rather, they point to a form of what I earlier called weak conceptualism. This is the thesis that the contents of experience are open to conceptualization. For weak conceptualists, the contents of perceptual experience are all open to conceptualization, and this is why they can provide warrant for beliefs.

If the kinds of non-conceptual contents discussed earlier are to be epistemologically efficacious, then they would have to fit at least the weak conceptualist definition – at least according to McDowell. It should be clear, however, that this is not so. Hyletic contents clearly are not concepts (or ideal contents – the intuitable correlate of conceptual acts). Also, it should be clear that they are not weakly conceptual either. Hyletic data do not provide direct warrant for beliefs. They do not, in fact, represent objects or features of objects at all; they are rather the data *through* which such representation is possible. Because of this, hyletic data cannot be content of a form fit to 'figure in discursive activity' (McDowell 2013, 42).

It would seem, therefore, that from McDowell's point of view, hyletic contents must be epistemically superfluous. They cannot have a role to play in a story about justification, since they are not weakly conceptual. The question to ask is whether Husserl too would have to draw that conclusion. I will try to make clear in what follows that although I think Husserl would accept that hyletic contents do not live up to the specific conditions set by McDowell, this does not imply that he regards them as epistemically superfluous.

In *Logical Investigations,* Husserl's rough qualification of sensations as 'building blocks' did not yield a very clear understanding of how they function in the

structure of intentionality. This situation does not improve substantially in *Ideas I* – although *Thing and Space* from 1907 does contain some elaborations as to the structural similarities the sensations bear already with regard to the intentional content they help to construct. Yet what does change considerably with *Ideas I* is Husserl's understanding of phenomenology's place as a whole in relation to the sciences and epistemology (I address this in greater detail in *Chapter 5*). This understanding should also make the role of hyletic data in phenomenological epistemology more clear, as I purport to discuss next.

To see how this could be so, we might first try to follow a distinction introduced by Hopp (2008b) between two kinds of 'dependence'. Hopp is interested in the sort of epistemological foundationalism transcendental phenomenology subscribes to. In his paper, Hopp makes an argument against Drummond (1991), claiming that Drummond confuses *ontological* and *epistemological* dependence (Hopp 2008b, 200). Ontological dependence, as Hopp extracts from the third *Logical Investigations* (which is mostly on the logic of parts and wholes), is the case when 'a content of a species A is founded upon a content of the species B, [such that] A can by its essence […] not exist, unless B also exists' (Hopp 2008b, 200). Ontological dependence, then, coincides with what Husserl calls 'dependent moments'. The color of a chair, for instance, is a dependent moment of the chair, since it cannot exist without the chair as its substrate. It is thus ontologically dependent on it. This is different for the chair's leg, which is an independent part.

The distinction between dependent moments and independent parts is a logical one for Husserl. It is not obvious, therefore, how it would apply to Husserl's views on founding relations of justification. Hopp's next step is to show how that could be done. According to Hopp, all sorts of aspects of one's experiential belief state may contribute to that belief *being* true. Among others, that it exists, and that it is the consciousness of something, and so on – without those facts necessarily constituting *evidence* in support of that belief. It is, therefore, one thing to ask for the ontological conditions of a justified belief, and another to ask by what it is justified. This gives us a rough idea of the difference between ontological and epistemological dependence Hopp suggests.

Given Hopp's account of ontological dependence, it seems likely he would also submit that the sorts of non-conceptual contents delineated in this chapter are not epistemologically relevant; they would only be ontologically relevant. Hopp in fact makes a comparable case against Drummond, for whom horizonal structures and associative syntheses (I discuss these in *Chapter 6* and *7*) do have

(some kind of) epistemological significance. In a similar way, hyletic content should on this reading be taken to fit an ontological description of consciousness and its contents, without thereby implying that they are epistemologically efficacious. To offer further support that this could be Husserl's view, Hopp notes that in the case of *a priori* (e.g. mathematical) proofs, conflating ontologically and epistemically founding relations may result in psychologism – and this Husserl of course vigorously rejected.

Although I believe Hopp's distinction could be useful, I have doubts whether it works well for Husserl. For one, Hopp's reference to psychologism does not seem to adequately reflect Husserl's views. Husserl dismisses psychologism because it confuses natural facts with essential laws, not because it confuses epistemological and ontological dependence. These are two distinct issues. Hopp makes it seem as if those experiential aspects without the relevant epistemological efficacy would be 'patently contingent premises about my own psychological condition' (Hopp 2008b, 201). That indeed would amount to psychologism. But the obvious problem with this suggestion is that the kind of experiential features Husserl (and Drummond and I) discuss are not psychological at all. Phenomenology is not psychology; it is not a study of facts or things. Hopp makes it seem as if those descriptions of consciousness that do not address *what* justifies a belief must be psychological and therefore extra-epistemological. But this is clearly not true, so the parallel to psychologism does not really apply here.

Moreover, I am inclined to think that the very concept of ontological dependence cannot fit Husserl's mature phenomenological work at all. This is because Husserl's findings strictly speaking do not belong to *any* regional ontology.[65] At least in *Ideas I* (and after), Husserl conceives of phenomenological findings as transcendental; they come prior to any investigation into reality (or any kind of transcendent being). The idea that horizons, associations, or hyle could be appropriated as having merely ontological significance obviously presupposes that Husserl accepts the idea of an ontology of intentional acts. Husserl's transcendental phenomenology is, however, at no point concerned with the ontology of intentional acts.

Let me now try to explain my own position more clearly. The way I see it,

[65] Ontology, for Husserl, primarily refers to the various different kinds of objectivities studied by the sciences (for instance, the regional ontology of numbers, or of physical things, animals, etc.). A more complete explanation of why phenomenology does not have a regional ontology requires an account of Husserl's transcendentalism. Large parts of the following chapter are devoted to that.

phenomenological epistemology in Husserl's mature work is best understood as concerned with plainly describing the structures of experience in the transcendental life of the subject. I already mentioned why I think this task of description does not entirely or partially coincide with a notion of ontological description. But I think it equally defies the notion of epistemological dependence (as Hopp also suggests). Husserl is interested neither in the ontological structure of belief justification nor exclusively in *what* justifies a belief (i.e. its 'epistemological' structure). Instead, he is concerned with a much more elaborate, transcendental task of showing how something like justification takes place and how it is possible at all.

Husserl, then, would not consider any of the issues addressed in this chapter as extra-epistemological, even when they do not contribute immediately to an explanation of *what* justifies a belief. This proves the need for another concept to denote Husserl's phenomenological way to epistemology and the kind of role non-conceptual contents play therein. With regard to this, Drummond (1991) coined the term 'transcendental foundationalism'. I find this notion quite apt, but since foundationalism is not any of my direct concerns here, I will speak more generally of *transcendental-phenomenological epistemology*.

The kind of transcendental-phenomenological epistemology Husserl is concerned with takes recourse to the *whole of conscious life* – including passive syntheses, hyletic data, and other structures and contents contemporary debates might set aside as irrelevant 'psychological' processes. Within this framework, Husserl can admit that non-conceptual hyletic contents are not part of *what* justifies a belief, and yet allow them to contribute to a transcendental-phenomenological epistemology. A more complete understanding of this transcendental approach to epistemology certainly requires a more comprehensive account of Husserl's complicated transcendental views. This will be the central topic of *Chapter 5*.

### *4.2.4. Concluding Remarks*

This chapter served primarily to outline the general structure of intentionality as defended by Husserl in *Ideas I*. To conclude this chapter, I here offer a brief summary of the main ideas defended.

I argued that (i) Husserl presents intentionality as a relation of act-process and presented content, a concept which applies only to consciousness in the pregnant sense (unlike for instance in contemporary intentionalist theses). I further showed

that (ii) on the act-side of this relation we find non-conceptual hyletic content. On the side of presented content, (iii) there is (in intentional acts) always reference to an identical point of unity. Intentional acts (iv) that are not themselves theoretical (forming judgements about the things presented in intentional experience) can in principle be converted to theoretical acts that conceptually explicate the intentional object. At the same time, the (v) complete presented content is never exhausted by its reference to a conceptually explicable object. At least in terms of its phenomenology, what is made available to the subject in any intentional experience exceeds the sorts of things propositional structures could capture. In the final part, I argued that (vi) non-conceptual content does not need to be part of what justifies beliefs in order to fit coherently the aims of a more encompassing transcendental-epistemological research program.

Together, *Chapter 3* and *4* addressed, among others, Husserl's general theory of intentionality, his views on epistemic justification in terms of the synthesis of full and empty meaning acts, the role of non-conceptual sensory or hyletic contents in intentionality, and his thoughts on the expressibility of the noema (weak conceptualism). In the following chapter, I give a systematic outline of the transcendental-phenomenological method and Husserl's sharp views on the scope of philosophy. Besides reflecting briefly on how Husserl's transcendentalism differs from Kant, I here offer more detailed analyses of the differences between Husserl's perspective on philosophy and McDowell's, on the basis of which we can better understand how the question of conceptualism is to be understood within Husserl's philosophy. After that, in *Chapter 6* and *7*, I turn to Husserl's genetic phenomenology, where the full conceptualist thesis is most clearly dealt with.

# Chapter 5. Transcendental Consciousness, Nature, and Reasons

*Chapter Summary*
This chapter consists of two parts. The first part deals with Husserl's characterization of phenomenology as a transcendental science. I here discuss the basics of the phenomenological method and the nature of its commitment to transcendental idealism, which together disclose transcendental consciousness as the proper research field of philosophy. In the second part, I juxtapose this conception of phenomenology to aspects of McDowell's conceptualist philosophy. I here focus on five fundamental points of divergence: (i) the naturalism McDowell accepts as default, (ii) his related philosophical attempt to account for reason's tie into nature, (iii) his restriction of reasons to concepts, (iv) his positing of non-rational consciousness in the realm of law studied by natural science, and (v) his externalist account of reasons.

## 5.1. Transcendental Phenomenology

### *5.1.1. Introduction and Overview of the Chapter*

In this chapter I offer a discussion of the methodical side of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, which I subsequently relate to certain aspects of McDowell's conceptualist theory.[66] Perhaps the single most significant development in Husserl's thought concerns his move from a 'descriptive psychology' as found in *Logical Investigations* to a transcendental phenomenology. In his mature thought, Husserl's analyses of intentionality (of consciousness's comportment toward things) gain a 'radical change of meaning' (Husserl 1997b, 235) by being read in the light of a 'first philosophy'. Phenomenology now becomes a transcendental science that aims to disclose how consciousness constitutes its objects. This transcendentalism does not merely latch onto phenomenological analyses. It also changes Husserl's thinking about epistemology, consciousness, and reality – issues related to the philosophy of perception and its contents.

This chapter consists of two parts. In the first, I discuss Husserl's views on phenomenological method, its transcendental character, and the kind of

[66] Earlier versions of parts of this chapter will be published as a chapter in the Springer-series *Contributions to Phenomenology* in *The Subject(s) of Phenomenology: New Approaches to Husserl* by the title 'Transcendental consciousness: subject, object, or neither?', see Van Mazijk (2017b).

philosophical commitments onto which the latter ascription rests. Here I develop a systematic reading of transcendental phenomenology that is, at least in some sense, not metaphysically neutral. Contrary to alternative readings, I suggest that transcendental phenomenology involves a certain metaphysical commitment which is necessary to maintain the very idea of a transcendental science. On Husserl's views, this commitment is an absolutely indubitable starting point for philosophy, which helps disclose its proper subject matter, namely the complete streaming life of transcendental consciousness which constitutes natural reality in itself.

In the second part, I juxtapose this transcendental conception of phenomenology to McDowell's conceptualist philosophy. I here focus on five important points of difference, which concern (i) the naturalism McDowell accepts as default, (ii) the very idea that philosophy ought to provide an account of how reasons tie into nature, (iii) the restriction of reasons exclusively to concepts, (iv) the positing of all passive, pre-conceptual sense-making in the realm of natural-scientific explanation, and lastly (v) the specification of conceptualism as an externalist philosophy.

Because of such differences, I argue, the kind of approach to the perception-thought relation in phenomenology differs quite radically from what we find in the philosophies of both Kant and McDowell. This means, among others, that Husserl is able to look for a 'genesis' of reason that lies outside of reason itself, something inconceivable for different reasons for both Kant and McDowell. As a result, the question of conceptualism gains an entirely different signification within Husserl's philosophy. The clarification of the 'genesis' of reason from so-called passive or 'pre-predicative' experience as well as the ways in which, reversely, rationality influences passivity – as a kind of phenomenology of *Bildung* – then become central concerns in the final two chapters.

### *5.1.2. On the Reduction, Freedom From Prejudice, and Pure Consciousness*

It is a peculiar mark of Husserl's mature transcendental philosophy to combine a highly systematic and technical setup of the phenomenological method with the pursuit of a science that is to be purely descriptive and non-theoretical. Most of Husserl's methodological efforts do not so much go out to explaining the details of how to do phenomenological description itself, or on how to put things down in the right way. Instead, what demands systematic exposition, according to Husserl, is the proper *field* of phenomenological inquiry, and the *way* to bring it

into view fully in its own right. For Husserl, pure phenomenology depends as a possibility on its research field (pure consciousness), which must be shown to have its very own essence. Exposing this demands a kind of 'Copernican revolution' (Husserl 1997b, 135) in transcendental philosophy – unmistakably a reference to Kant's claim to a similar revolution.

Part of the great difficulty of Husserl's revolution, which is very different in content from Kant's, is the radical change it demands relative to our normal ways of thinking. Because of this, Husserl continuously sought new ways to show the possibility of transcendental phenomenology,[67] sometimes offering a step-by-step procedure (for instance in *Ideas I*) while at other times suggesting it 'in a single blow' (Husserl 1976, 153). The relevant change of perspective, Husserl thinks, belongs as an essential possibility to our 'perfect freedom' as rational deliberators (Husserl 1983, 58). Transcendental phenomenology is not just an invention, but a *discovery* that lies essentially within our reach. Its research field awaits our study, and the accompanying method belongs to that field by necessity, i.e. is likewise discoverable.

Husserl frequently uses the word 'reduction' (usually preceded by the adjective transcendental, phenomenological, or both) to characterize the change of perspective that brings us from the 'natural attitude' to the transcendental-phenomenological one. The natural attitude, which is not necessarily a naturalistic attitude, is our naturally default and ubiquitous mode of experiencing. Above all, it is characterized by a naïve acceptance of the existence of things as they are presented in everyday life. In other words, in the natural attitude, the fact of the givenness of things as being real is simply taken for granted. In both practical and scientific activity, we tend to comport ourselves toward things which we take to be real, i.e. to exist for themselves. This natural attitude is the fundamental mode in which all of human life runs its course, and which has determined the tracks of science throughout the millennia.

Regarding the transition from the natural to the phenomenological stance, the term 'reduction' seems somewhat unfortunately chosen. Husserl does not seek to reduce any objective aspect of the world (any of the regional ontologies). Moreover, it would seem the experiential dimensions belonging to the natural attitude cannot be subject to a proper reduction either. Any reduction of ordinary world-experience – whether types of objects or attitudes – would entail some

[67] See also Kern (1977), who in his influential article on the three ways to transcendental phenomenology differentiates a Cartesian, psychological, and ontological way to the phenomenological reduction.

modification of its phenomenological structures, which are precisely the focal point of study. Husserl, therefore, also speaks of the move from the one attitude to the other as adding a second perspective to the first (Husserl 1976, 155, 210; 1973a, 71-75). This way, we are to keep everything exactly as it was before, that is, as in the natural attitude (Husserl 1973a, 59-60, 69, 71-75, 116-117), while considering all of that in a novel way through the newly added perspective.

So what does the new, phenomenological perspective add to what we had previously? For Husserl, the phenomenological stance, by a radical shift of attention, first makes the unfolding of the world through concrete experience the focal point. In phenomenology, we thus keep our ordinary comportment toward things, including the belief structures that accompany them, but we make the concrete unfolding of that through lived experience our theme. The phenomenological stance thus adds a new perspective (from which we perform the reduction) which should make the very same comportment toward things we ordinarily have thematic in a different way.

This leaves the principal difficulty of how to bring one's own experience into view in the right way open. The problem here concerns the achievement of a completely transparent disclosure of the desired subject matter, a difficulty fueled by the constant tendency to slip back into the natural attitude. Simply put, what is needed to discover pure consciousness is an absolute freedom from prejudice.[68] According to Husserl, this 'only demands a rejection of "judgments alien to experience"' (Husserl 1983, 38). In other words, it requires that we set out of play all theories, assumptions, and general ways of conceiving that are extrinsic to the unfolding experience itself. This includes even the very existence of things accepted by default in the natural attitude. To be sure, this complete suspension should not require a prior theoretical concept of what pure experience is – which would be self-refuting. Instead, if all prejudices are dropped, including that of the existence of the world, one is *inevitably* left with just the pure experience. Only by a complete suspension can consciousness be brought into view purely in terms of its own being, rather than presumptuously as a piece of natural reality.

Phenomenology, therefore, on Husserl's account of it, does not seek to deny natural reality or even to genuinely doubt it. Instead, it only temporarily suspends reality (at the level of the second perspective added to the first) because it takes it to be an assumption which blurs our immediate access to pure consciousness. Phenomenology's subject matter can only be revealed by suspending all theory,

[68] The move toward freedom from prejudice is often referred to as the *epoché,* meaning 'suspension'.

which includes natural thinking – 'the constant presupposition upon which the totality of scientific positivity [rests]' (Husserl 1997b, 235).[69] To be sure, the pure consciousness thus discovered still includes in itself the natural attitude and the corresponding sense of the natural world. More exactly, we have the very same world-experience as before, only now we consider it purely *as* world-experience, rather than taking the objects of our intentional directedness as really existing things, as we are prone to do in the natural attitude.

### *5.1.3. From Phenomenology to Transcendental Philosophy*

So far we have seen that Husserl's mature thoughts about the method of exposing the right field of transcendental-phenomenological inquiry requires adding a meta-perspective to ordinary world-experience. From this viewpoint, we subsequently suspend all beliefs and theoretical presuppositions ordinarily entertained to attain complete freedom from biases. With even the natural world thus suspended, we are left with only pure experience, which nonetheless still gives us the natural world as it ordinarily does, now thematic *as* it unfolds in pure consciousness (i.e. as noema, rather than 'naively' as natural world, see Husserl 1997b, 235).

All of this does not yet, however, yield us a transcendental, absolutely foundational phenomenology. In the early 1900s, Husserl became increasingly occupied with securing a deeper philosophical foundation of knowledge and reality. The search for this convinced him that phenomenology is more than one scientific discipline among others concerned with acts of consciousness. According to Husserl, a transcendental turn is possible upon phenomenology, through which philosophy as such can reach its ultimate form. It is this foundational enterprise which yields the clearest picture of Husserl's mature views on the task and scope of philosophy, the core of which he would not abandon for the rest of his lifetime.

In the following section, I aim at a systematic reconstruction of Husserl's transcendental-philosophical views.[70] Particularly outstanding features of my

[69] A critical stance toward naturalism runs as a consistent thread throughout Husserl's thinking. For an overview of Husserl's critiques of naturalism, see Moran (2008).

[70] Besides using more well-known works, the following exposition draws substantially on certain posthumously published texts. Rather than tracing any differences between these various later works, I shall aim at a more systematic reconstruction of the kind of transcendental idealism Husserl subscribed to.

reading of transcendental phenomenology are that it (a) understands it as involving a metaphysical commitment, and (b) takes consciousness not as any kind of object or regional ontology, but as encompassing the totality of being considered from the transcendental-phenomenological perspective. This metaphysical commitment, for Husserl, is only the consistent (and *a priori* established) completion of the theoretical attempt to institute philosophy in its ultimate form. This philosophy – transcendental phenomenology – provides the final clarification of knowledge *and* being through the mere description, systematically, unbiased and without extrinsic motives, of the ways in which things are manifest.

In developing this reading, I first focus on a key interpretative difficulty regarding Husserl's transcendentalism which divides scholars up until today. This problem roughly concerns the status of the transcendental-phenomenological field of inquiry relative to those of the objective sciences. After exposing the problem, I offer a new interpretation of it which should address the relevant ambiguities in Husserl's writings. The second part of this chapter then juxtaposes this reading to McDowell's philosophical views and the conceptualism that ties into it.

### *5.1.4. Transcendental Phenomenology and Its Metaphysics*

As I showed in *Chapter 3,* already in *Logical Investigations* Husserl operates with a crucial distinction between the object-appearance and the appearing object. The object-appearance, it is noted, belongs to the study of consciousness. The appearing object, by contrast, is not a part of consciousness. The phenomenologist studies consciousness's comportment toward things. But those things themselves, considered as the physical, real objects they are, are of no phenomenological concern. They are studied by the objective sciences.

In *Ideas I*, which marks Husserl public turn to transcendental idealism[71], Husserl maintains this view. Again, he notes that the object-appearance and appearing object are to be kept apart (Husserl 1983, 214-216). Husserl's further remarks that consciousness is 'absolute' and that 'nothing can penetrate and [...] slip' into it (Husserl 1983, 109-112) likewise serve to indicate the reality-independent status of the 'appearance-reality' of consciousness.[72] This

[71] Husserl's commitment to transcendental idealism dates back, however, to the winter lectures from 1906-1907. See also Melle (2010).

[72] I adopt the today more familiar Searlean term 'appearance-reality' here to address what Husserl

independence basically entails that facts about (say) the chair I now perceive do not bear on this chair as appearance-reality. To be sure, changes in the physical environment may in obvious ways lead to changes in experiential content, for instance if someone were to paint the chair in a different color. Husserl's point is, however, more subtle. The 'chair-appearance' has a sense which is categorically distinct from the sense 'real chair'. When it comes to studying the structure of the former, facts about the latter are not directly relevant. Both have their own 'essence'.

In *Ideas III,* Husserl repeats the same point in a new way. Here, Husserl expressly states that the theme of phenomenology has to be 'a totally different one' than the one central to natural-scientific research. As he here puts it: 'a "physical thing" as correlate [of consciousness] is not a physical thing; therefore the quotation marks' (Husserl 1980, 72). Investigating the appearance-reality of a chair is essentially distinct from inquiries into the chair's real, natural structures. Husserl, we may therefore conclude, consistently defends the separation of phenomenological and objective-scientific concerns throughout his career.

If we follow this line of thought further, it could be tempting to conclude that consciousness and real object must be altogether 'distinct entities' for Husserl (Smith and McIntyre 1989, 162). No examination of consciousness could then say anything about real things. Phenomenology, on this reading, defended in various forms among others by Føllesdal (1969), Dreyfus and Hall (1982), McIntyre (1986), McIntyre and Smith (1989), D. W. Smith (2007, 2013), explains the appearing of real chairs, that is, of the 'real chair as appearance'. It describes consciousness's *access to* reality. It does not, however, address the real chair itself. It is, in other words, a form of epistemological idealism (McIntyre 1982, 104), which examines our knowledge of and access to things, but not the very being of those things.

The problem with this reading is, however, that there is an abundance of textual evidence that appears to contradict it. Throughout his mature works, we find Husserl apparently negating his separation of consciousness from reality, claiming that reality in fact 'is possible only as an intentional unity motivated in transcendentally pure consciousness' (Husserl 1983, 115). The 'whole spatiotemporal world […] is nothing' beyond its 'being for a consciousness' (Husserl 1983, 112). It is altogether inconceivable, he further notes, that any object would ever signify a 'reaching out beyond the world which is for

calls the thing-appearance (*Dingerscheinung*) in opposition to the appearing thing (*erscheinende Ding*). See Searle (1992, 122; 1997, 112).

consciousness' (Husserl 1983, 121). Every existent, everything 'transcendent necessarily must be experienceable […] by an *actual* ego' (Husserl 1983, 108). Reality does not somehow contain two types of being which would 'dwell peaceably side by side' (Husserl 1983, 111); the 'true being of nature is not a second one next to mere intentional being' (Husserl 2002a, 276).

So here is our dilemma: if we follow the line of thought I first exposed, we can maintain phenomenology's independent scientific status; phenomenology has its own distinct object of study. Also, we avoid having to open Pandora's Box and question Husserl's unorthodox idealist commitments. On the downside, however, this reading leaves us virtually no tools to make sense of Husserl's recurring ideal of a transcendental phenomenology, which, he frequently asserts, addresses meaning *and* being: it clarifies 'every imaginable sense, every imaginable *being*' from transcendental consciousness as that which 'constitutes sense *and being*' (Husserl 1973a, 117 my italics). In short, by maintaining a strict separation of consciousness and object, we cannot really explain why Husserl says that the world is nothing beyond its being for consciousness.

If, on the other hand, we follow the second line of thought, we face the substantial threat of losing phenomenology's status as an independent science. If transcendental consciousness is truly the 'All of absolute being' (Husserl 1983, 116) which 'contains within itself […] all worldly transcendencies' (Husserl 1983, 113) beyond which there is nothing, then it seems the phenomenologist can no longer be said to study the chair as appearance in opposition to the real chair. The real chair has simply collapsed into the appearing chair; now there *are* only appearing chairs.

The dilemma outlined above is also known (in a somewhat different form) as the famous noema-debate between so-called east and west coast readers of Husserl. The debate reveals the difficulties involved in understanding Husserl's commitment to transcendental idealism. In what follows I want to propose a simple solution to it. The way I see it, there is another way to reconstruct Husserl's intentions which in fact makes both claims perfectly compatible. The central idea here is that there need be nothing contradictory about claiming that (i) appearance-reality and reality are the same while (ii) also maintaining that they are different, on the condition that we can exploit both claims coherently at different levels.

This is, to my mind, how things indeed stand for Husserl. On the one hand, I want to suggest that the mature Husserl makes a deeper commitment – one we might call metaphysical, as I explain in a bit – where he identifies being-for-

consciousness and real being, claiming that the latter too is necessarily being-for-consciousness, and that to deny this would be a non-sense.[73] Yet on the other hand, at a higher – ontological, in Husserl's terms – level, Husserl maintains that real being, once accomplished by consciousness, acquires a status distinct from consciousness *qua* sense or *qua* theme of inquiry, even though it is never radically beyond consciousness.

Let me first address the first (i) part of this solution in a bit more detail, the one which addresses appearance-reality and reality as identical. As I stated above, the way to account for this identification is by reading Husserl as accepting a certain metaphysical postulate. To understand what I mean by this, it is useful first to come to terms with the term 'metaphysical' here. In the present context, 'metaphysical' does not serve to suggest that some speculative thesis with no basis in experienceable reality is involved (as Kant for instance speaks of special metaphysics). Instead, 'metaphysical' here (as in its classic sense) refers to a positive claim about what all (actual and possible) being in its final sense amounts to. It thus refers to matters concerning the first principles of being.

Certainly some (probably most) readers will find the idea of subscribing a metaphysical commitment to Husserl odd. Yet if we understand 'metaphysical' in its classic sense, as referring to the initial conditions or most fundamental make-up of all being – rather than to an abstract theory with no basis in reality – then Husserl in fact discusses the issue quite openly in numerous (near to all later) works. It figures, for instance, in the annihilation of the world argument in *Ideas I*. Here, Husserl first purports to convince us that we can imagine a consciousness which has immanent activity but no transcendent reality constituted in that. We can, for instance, perfectly imagine a creature (let's say, a coral polyp or a jelly fish) which has immanent subjective-conscious connections, but which lacks a proper objective reality constituted in that. Consciousness, then, can be thought without a world correlated to it. Husserl's second – and much more crucial – step is to then show that the reverse thesis is *not* imaginable (Husserl 1983, 109-112). Husserl claims that we cannot conceive of world without consciousness; that would be a non-sensical thought. Now this reverse thesis – that world or being cannot be conceived without consciousness – must be understood as a metaphysical thesis.

[73] The idea that transcendental phenomenology involves metaphysical commitments has been discussed by some philosophers, including Luft (2005), A. D. Smith (2003), Moran (2005) and Zahavi (2010). Of these four authors, both Luft and Zahavi ultimately deny that Husserl's notion of transcendental consciousness is a metaphysical one (Luft 2000, 152, Zahavi 2010, 83).

Consciousness, then, has a kind of metaphysical priority for Husserl. While consciousness can be thought without world, the world cannot be thought without consciousness. Husserl expresses the same commitment at various places: 'the world, every thinkable world in general is only thinkable as relative, relative to the reality of consciousness' (Husserl 2003, 78); 'truth and reality only have meaning *for us* and *can* only have meaning [in general] due to the life of consciousness' (Husserl 1973a, 94-95); everything 'transcendent necessarily must be experienceable […] by an *actual* ego' (Husserl 1983, 108); 'transcendental philosophy shows that the world is only thinkable as idea in the coherence of transcendental subjectivity' (Husserl 2002b, 26). Real things, then, inevitably are possible things-for-consciousness, which means there ultimately can be no being apart from appearing being.

The obvious reason this amounts to a metaphysical thesis in the sense defined is that Husserl here commits himself to a claim about what all being amounts to. More exactly, transcendental phenomenology positively characterizes all possible and actual being as being-for-consciousness. To be sure, Husserl does not himself so much consider this a metaphysical postulate, but rather an *a priori* valid insight. There is a 'universal *a priori* correlation' between objects and consciousness (Husserl 1976, 161), and we can ascertain ourselves this in indubitable insight. That the real chair must ultimately collapse into the appearing chair is plainly undeniable; its negation would be a non-sense. There is, Husserl maintains, no sense at all to the idea of an object that excludes relations to apprehending consciousness – even the very idea presupposes a consciousness entertaining it.

The complete argument for Husserl's transcendental-phenomenological idealism would have to draw on Husserl's views on apodictic (*a priori*) insight, which rely strongly on his understanding of pure imagination. In brief, Husserl understands *a priori* to refer to pure possibility, i.e. to pure imaginative possibility in detachment from actuality. Any *a priori* proposition is one which holds valid in pure possibility, and therefore 'prescribes rules' to the actual (as an instance of the possible). Euclidean geometrical propositions are examples of regionally valid *a priori* propositions. Now since Husserl conceives of pure possibility as belonging to the free play of our pure imaginative variation, it is our capacity to *imaginatively conceive* which sets the mark for the *a priori*. The fact that we cannot possibly imagine *any* object other than as object for a possible consciousness

therefore makes the 'universal correlation' *a priori*.[74]

Consequently, Husserl believes it is not just accidentally the case that all being is tied to constituting consciousness. It is no mere theory. Rather, we can ascertain ourselves *a priori* that it cannot possibly be otherwise, because we cannot possible *conceive* of it being otherwise, i.e. we cannot imaginatively vary that possibility. It is this postulate Husserl accepts – appropriated by him as an apodictically ascertainable insight – that we can characterize as metaphysical: it is a postulate concerning the initial conditions or fundamental make-up of all being. All actual and possible being is dependent upon transcendentally constituting consciousness.

The acceptance of this postulate is in no way contingent to Husserl's philosophy, but strictly necessary for transcendental phenomenology to take off.[75] Phenomenology is transcendental – addressing the 'final source' of things (Husserl 1976, 100) – only on the premise that 'everything' in its final sense can be 'brought back' to transcendental consciousness (Husserl 1980, 69). Indeed, it must be an absolute non-sense to even suggest the *possibility* of existence beyond consciousness. Without this certainty, there is no absolute guarantee that phenomenology (as a study of consciousness) can offer the final clarification of 'every imaginable sense, every imaginable being' (Husserl 1973a, 117) – and the very possibility of such doubt alone would suffice to discredit its claim to a transcendentally foundational science.

The metaphysical commitment thus satisfies (i): that appearance-reality and reality are in a sense identical, i.e. that they do not 'dwell peaceably side by side' (Husserl 1983, 111); that the real world is not something apart from or beyond being for consciousness (Husserl 1983, 112). The question now to consider is how Husserl could make this compatible with the second (ii) claim, that appearance-reality and reality must at the same time be understood as distinct.

The way he does this is by claiming that in regional-ontological terms, the empirical sciences study an objective reality which *qua* sense or *qua* theme is

[74] The correlation is universal because it applies to all possible objects.

[75] It might be worth adding that doing phenomenology *as such* does not demand this *a priori* thesis about all actual and possible being. We can quite easily see that even if there could be things beyond transcendental consciousness, Husserl's statements about e.g. physical thing constitution could still hold *a priori* within a certain region. More exactly, the phenomenological laws of physical thing constitution could then hold *a priori* within the now limited (ontological) region of consciousness. In short, an *a priori* phenomenology could do without the metaphysical commitment. However, it would then be a 'de-transcendentalized' phenomenology, and hence not the phenomenology the mature Husserl envisaged.

independent from consciousness. This is, I think, the correct intuition underlying many west coast readings. In terms of *themes of inquiry*, phenomenology and empirical science have different objects. That is to say, once constituted by consciousness, reality by its very essence appears to consciousness *as* consciousness-independent. That is in fact part of what it means to be 'real'; to have the *sense*-ascription of consciousness-independence. And it is in conformity with that sense that it can become its own theme of inquiry – even though it is not thereby distinct from consciousness at the more fundamental level, as the metaphysical thesis guarantees.

The distinction in sense or scientific theme, then, does not exclude an underlying unity of both as specified by the metaphysical thesis. In other words, it is not necessitated by the fact that phenomenology is a science with its own theme that it would study a distinct object in the literal sense. West coast readings (Smith and McIntyre, among others), to my mind, generally fail to acknowledge that their view regarding the distinct themes of natural science and phenomenology is compatible with Husserl's metaphysical commitment that a real object is never more than an object for consciousness.[76] Husserl can maintain, conform (ii), that speaking of a real chair is not to speak of an appearing chair; these are different themes or senses. Yet he can also say, conform (i), that in any natural-scientific claim about the real world, about how 'it is there […] in the ways in which we know it, there *lies a claim about consciousness*' (Husserl 2003, 111), because consciousness is *a priori* involved in reality. The two claims are not in conflict because they must be understood, so to say, at different levels.

To conclude this: phenomenological and empirical-scientific investigations have different themes, but they do not study distinct objects. Whereas the sciences leap over the constituting activities of consciousness and the object *as* produced in it to the object *as* real, which ultimately is only a constitutive accomplishment of consciousness, the phenomenologist studies ('metaphysically' speaking) the same object, only now *as* constituted appearance-reality in constituting consciousness. As Husserl puts it: the 'transcendence [of the

[76] Their reading of Husserl as an epistemological idealist (rather than a metaphysical idealist) is subsequent upon this separation of noema and real being. The mature Husserl, however, expressly states that the category of being cannot signify anything in complete isolation of possible absolute consciousness (e.g. Husserl 2003, 55-56). Being, therefore, falls entirely in the scope of possible consciousness (Husserl 2002a, 270-271), which to my mind renders a weaker epistemological reading of Husserl's transcendentalism incredible.

empirically real object] is part of the intrinsic *sense* of anything worldly, *despite* the fact that [it] necessarily acquires *all the sense determining it*, *along with its existential status*, exclusively from my experiencing' (Husserl 1973a, 65 my italics). This latter level of constituting experiencing is made thematic in transcendental phenomenology. The real object of natural-scientific inquiry is metaphysically speaking not beyond this level; only *qua* sense or *qua* theme of inquiry does it acquire a separate status.

### *5.1.5. The Scope of Transcendental Phenomenology*

The previous sections made clear that transcendental consciousness, as the 'object' of transcendental-phenomenological inquiry, does not stand simply on a par with other fields of inquiry. Phenomenology does not have its own region of objects of study as the other sciences do. Instead, it contains, in a way, all other regional ontologies in itself (Husserl 1980, 66; 1983, 113), as it includes the positing of reality and therewith of all the target objects of scientific research in itself. There is ultimately only *one world* which we can study: the world experienced by consciousness.[77] The phenomenologist examines this very world: 'the always presumed world, as and how it is presumed, the always known and knowable world, precisely as it is known and knowable' (Husserl 1974b, 43). By 'carrying out the transcendental-phenomenological reduction, […] we make *the world as such our theme together with every natural consideration of the world*, from an *ultimate standpoint* […] which includes *all critique of reason and all genuine philosophical problems*' (Husserl 1977, 170 my italics).

It follows from this account that transcendental-phenomenological idealism does not involve any loss of sense of reality as readers have often assumed. It does not lock oneself in one's own mind, or impairs one's ability to speak about one's own death, other persons, or dinosaurs roaming our planet long ago. For Husserl, transcendental-phenomenological idealism rather means to *see* – to hold in *absolute evidence* – that the world in all the ways it has ever been and can ever be is an unfolding in or through one's own consciousness. It is an idealism that is 'not a product of sportive argumentations, to be won in the dialectical contest

[77] Consequently, it is not just *subjectivity*, but the very *totality of being* that can be considered in two opposing ways on Husserl's account. First, as the universe of self-existing things, that is, as the real world in its natural sense *as* consciousness-independent (the so-called natural attitude). Second, as 'one's own' universe; the universe that appears, as it is made manifest in the absolute flow of experience.

with 'realism", but rather 'nothing more than […] an explication of my ego as subject of *every possible cognition*, and indeed with respect to *every sense of what exists*' (Husserl 1973a, 118).

It can now further become clear what massive expectations Husserl had for his philosophy, which reach far beyond the basic structure of intentionality discussed in *Chapter 4* and even farther beyond what Kant considered the scope of transcendental research. On Husserl's picture, everything that meaningfully speaking 'is' in the widest possible sense (including exact and imaginary objects, other persons, but also non-objective manifestations such as sensations, moods, emotions, etc.) has its parallel in phenomenological science, as the object of transcendental-phenomenological inquiry which addresses the structure of the accomplishment in question as it is manifest in pure consciousness. Phenomenology can therefore extend far beyond general epistemological concerns; it also clarifies the final sense of intersubjectivity, value, ethics, social institutions, empathy, perception, history, habits, personal identity, practice, action, movement, religion, death, emotions, space, time, and so on.

Importantly, Husserl believes all of this to be encompassed within the distinctively transcendental science of phenomenology, and furthermore he deems the execution of this possible in an entirely *a priori* fashion. As I discussed earlier, Husserl considers the term *a priori* to refer to the role of pure imagination in varying possibilities freely as opposed to being concerned with actuality. To judge *a priori* therefore does not necessarily mean to judge with logical-mathematical exactness.[78] It also does not necessarily mean to judge something

[78] Husserl himself put particular weight on the connection between *a priori* and exact determination in analyzing Kant's alleged failures, targeting Kant's notion of *a priori* as a half-mythical construct at several places (Husserl 1974b, 13, see also 1976, 93-120). It seems Husserl thought Kant misunderstood the phenomenology of *a priori* judgment, and wrongly restricted its application to the regions of exact science. This could match Ricoeur's (2009) critique of Kant that even though 'space and time are the forms of sensibility, they underlie the construction of the mathematical sciences'. As he continues somewhat dramatically, for 'Kant [therefore] all *a priori* are doomed to intellectuality' (Ricoeur 2009, ix), that is, to exact determination. It is this Kantian conception which Husserl appears to have in mind when he remarks that 'there is not the slightest reason to consider the methodological structure of *a priori* thinking […] as an exclusive property of the mathematical sphere' (Husserl 1997a, 353). The capacity for free variation presupposed by *a priori* cognition is 'everywhere the same' (Husserl 1997a, 354). Indeed, for Husserl the adjective *a priori* says more about 'the essential relationship of actuality and possibility, of experience and pure imagination' (EJ 353), than about the quality of exactness of the essence expressed. Ideation, for Husserl, has no regional limitations: 'from *every* concrete actuality, and every individual trait actually experienced in it or capable of being experienced, a path stands

with the most abstract generality conceivable. One can intuit *a priori* the essence of a sound or a color in general as much as one can intuit *a priori* the necessity of the Pythagorean Theorem in a Euclidean manifold. What makes a judgment *a priori* is the fact that pure possibility is at stake rather than actuality.

Interestingly, this differs strikingly from Kant's understanding of what transcendental *a priori* investigation should be concerned with. As I showed in *Chapter 1,* Kant restricts the transcendental inquiry of subjective consciousness so as to include only the most universal, non-composite, and not empirically derivable forms of the experience of any object whatsoever (CPR B89). It is thus only concerned with the universal, pure form of cognition, where 'pure' signifies the complete abstraction from the concrete contents of experience, which for Kant are *a posteriori,* and where 'cognition' is shaped by the ideal of mathematical-exact determination of the spatiotemporal manifold.[79]

Evidently, this Kantian picture severely limits the scope of transcendental *a priori* investigation of consciousness. For Kant, only the most abstract forms of intuition and thought which remain after abstracting from all concrete experiential content fall within the scope of transcendental inquiry. This excludes 'sight, hearing, touch, as in the case of the sensations of colours, sounds, and heat […] [which] do not of themselves yield […] any *a priori* knowledge' (CPR B44). Because of this, Kant cannot allow for any regional subdivisions of pure *a priori* cognitions in his transcendental philosophy. He cannot, for example, allow the *a priori* laws governing perceptual intentionality, imaginary representation, empathy, movement, or habit to enter into transcendental philosophy. All these matters must be excluded, given that he thinks they must plainly concern *a posteriori* experiential content, which transcendental inquiry should exclude.

Husserl, by contrast, broadens both the notion of *a priori* cognition – beyond mathematical exactitude – and that of transcendental cognition – beyond the most general, content-empty forms of the cognition of an object in general.

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open to the realm of ideal or pure possibility and consequently to that of *a priori* thinking' (Husserl 1997a, 353-354).

[79] The existence of synthetic *a priori* cognitions in exact science is what propels Kant's transcendental investigations, as Kant himself admits at several places (for instance CPR B41). The very idea of pure concepts (and their *a priori* determination of perception which is subsequent on this) is not proven by Kant with some kind of direct intuitive evidence as Husserl's phenomenological methodology has it; Kant rather appears to infer that pure concepts are in us from the alleged fact of our synthetic *a priori* cognitions, noting that the latter fact by itself indeed 'suffices to disprove' the opposing Humean theory of the derivation of these concepts (CPR B128, also A112-113).

Mathematical *a priori* determination of objects is here not the starting point from which transcendental philosophy looks for its pure forms. Instead, transcendental philosophy for Husserl rests as a possibility on the discovery of a *field of inquiry*, namely transcendental consciousness, which in its *totality* becomes subject to transcendental investigation, and whose *a priori* structures can be analyzed with regard to any of its contents.[80]

Indeed, this critique of Kant's transcendentalism, if it can be called so, can be transferred indirectly to Kant's theory of category conceptualism, since the conceptual determination of perception here concerns precisely and only the most general *a priori* forms of cognition of an object in general. In other words, if – from a Husserlian point of view – there is no sense to restricting transcendental inquiry to the pure concepts Kant points out in the first place, then the necessity of a category conceptualism also no longer follows. Considering Husserl's critique of Kant's notion of transcendental *a priori* cognition – or his own eidetic approach to consciousness taken for itself – therefore implies a critique of category conceptualism as well, insofar as those categories would be representative of an erroneous conception of transcendental inquiry.

To sum up this section: transcendental phenomenology represents Husserl's take on a universally foundational philosophy that covers all aspects of our world-engagements. Husserl is firmly convinced that it is the only true conception of philosophy; transcendental phenomenology is philosophy reaching its final form. A genuinely foundational philosophy cannot speculate, theorize, invent, or take for granted. It cannot assume any metaphysical conception of reality (e.g. naturalism), method of reasoning (e.g. logical deduction), or scientific approach generally (e.g. empiricism). The very *way of thinking* from which all of this stems (the natural attitude) must be suspended entirely. Nothing may interfere with the unbiased description of pure consciousness, through which natural reality in all its possible determinations comes to be given. The transcendental-phenomenological and *a priori* inquiry of pure consciousness (and

[80] Moreover, because, as I showed in the previous section, consciousness for Husserl contains in a way the sense of the world in itself, beyond which existence is *a priori* non-sensical, Kant's representationalism cannot be made sense of from Husserl's viewpoint. While for Kant 'representation in itself does not produce its object in so far as *existence* is concerned […].[but only makes] it possible to *know* anything *as an object*' (CPR A92-B125), transcendental phenomenology clarifies 'every imaginable sense, every imaginable *being*' from transcendental consciousness as that which 'constitutes sense *and being*' (Husserl 1973a, 117 my italics). In other words, Husserl abides by some form of metaphysical idealism, while Kant endorses some form of epistemological idealism. See also Van Mazijk (2018).

the world in all its determinations given through it) is then designated the only right field of philosophy.

To be sure, as also touched upon in the previous chapter, the sort of foundational science that is at stake in Husserl's transcendental philosophy must not be mistaken for a *justificatory* foundationalism. Transcendental phenomenology does not yield us basic, absolutely indubitable propositions from which the bodies of knowledge of the sciences could somehow be derived or which secures their validity. This, too, seems to be somewhat different with Kant's philosophy, which does aim at securing a foundation for science which renders their inquiries justified (Kant's *quid juris*). The foundationalism Husserl has in mind is, by contrast, predominantly *clarificatory*. Phenomenology clarifies the final sense of things by describing their necessary structures of being given to consciousness. It does not thereby offer a direct justification for any knowledge claim of any of the sciences that lie outside of its own well-delineated field.

## 5.2. Spaces of Nature, Reasons, and Consciousness

### *5.2.1. Spaces of Reasons and Nature: McDowell and Husserl*

In this section and the following one I purport to compare the previous account of transcendental phenomenology to aspects of McDowell's philosophy in *Mind and World*. McDowell is famous for a form of conceptualism which has also been described as a kind of 'externalization' of the space of reasons (e.g. Pritchard 2003). This reading is, especially in the fourth lecture of *Mind and World,* further spelled out through a consideration of the relation between the spaces of reasons and nature. Central aspects of this theory were already discussed in *Chapter 2*. In what follows, I return to McDowell's theory of spaces and compare it to the transcendental-phenomenological framework. I first focus on four points of divergence: (i) the naturalism McDowell accepts as default, (ii) his endeavor to provide a philosophical account of how reasons tie into nature, (iii) his restriction of reasons exclusively to concepts, and (iv) his positing of all non-rational, passive sense-making in the realm of natural-scientific explanation. After this, I compare (v) McDowell's 'externalist' account of reasons to Husserl's transcendental-phenomenological reading of consciousness.

Let me first repeat some important elements of McDowell's conceptualism and his picture of spaces of reasons and nature on which it rests. McDowell's main concern in *Mind and World* is to provide a new picture of ourselves that

retains a touch between empirical thinking and reality (McDowell 1996, 66). The idea of conceptual capacities operative in sensibility is supposed to do just that. It should, first of all, and contrary to a 'bald naturalism', pay homage to the *sui generis* structure of human spontaneity or the space of reasons. Bald naturalism, for McDowell, is the position that 'if there is any truth in talk of spontaneity, it must be capturable in terms whose fundamental role lies in displaying the position of things in nature' (McDowell 1996, 73). Another way to put this is to say that the bald naturalist, often motivated by a 'scientism that shapes much contemporary thinking' (McDowell 1996, 76), aims to '*reduce* the structure of the space of reasons' to structures of nature. Opponents of this view, including McDowell, hold that 'the structure of the space of reasons stubbornly resists being appropriated within a naturalism that conceives nature as the realm of law' (McDowell 1996, 73). According to opponents of bald naturalism, the 'contrast of logical spaces is genuine'. Or again: 'spontaneity-related concepts cannot be duplicated in terms of concepts whose fundamental point is to place things in the realm of law' (McDowell 1996, 74).

How does our thinking, construed in conformity with the latter picture which accepts the *sui generis* structure of the space of reasons, retain a touch with reality? One way out would be to accept the Myth of the Given; the space of reasons spills over into the lawful space of nature through our sentient natural life. Basic sensations would somehow form a bridge between our thoughts and an external reality. McDowell, following mainstream twentieth century analytic philosophy, deems this picture unsatisfactory. But according to him, an alternative and widespread conception, coherentism, cannot do either, as it would suggest a 'confinement imagery' (McDowell 1996, 16), leaving our thoughts floating above reality rather than in touch with it.

McDowell's own solution to this dilemma is his conceptualist doctrine. The conceptualist thesis specifies that conceptual capacities are operative all the way down into our sensibility. The space of reasons includes exercises of spontaneity onto operations of natural sensibility. As McDowell purports to show in the fourth lecture, this means that reasons are, albeit *sui generis* in structure, still somehow tied into nature after all. For if they were not, the space of reasons would have to be considered 'extra-natural', making conceptualism a form of 'rampant Platonism'. However, it seems McDowell cannot claim it is truly natural either, at least not in the sense that would make it adequately specifiable in terms whose intelligibility belongs to lawful nature – since that would amount to bald naturalism.

How does conceptualism solve this issue? Although McDowell aims to conceive of two heterogeneous spaces of intelligibility, he simultaneously suggests that the space of nature is not exclusively a lawful space, and thus, in some sense at least, could involve conceptual capacities, such that 'a concept of spontaneity that is *sui generis* […] can nevertheless enter into characterizing states and occurrences of sensibility' (McDowell 1996, 76). By widening the modern construal of nature beyond the realm of law McDowell thinks he can maintain that conceptual capacities can be said to be operative in sensibility as 'actualizations of *our nature*', yet at the same time, in order not to regress into bald naturalism, he holds that 'it *cannot* be as the natural phenomena they are that impressions are characterizable in terms of spontaneity' (McDowell 1996, 76 my italics). Somehow, then, conceptual capacities are 'actualizations of our nature' (to this extent that rampant Platonism is avoided) while at the same time not natural (to this extent that bald naturalism is avoided).

As I also suggested in *Chapter 2,* McDowell's position seems rather ambivalent on this crucial point. McDowell himself admits that 'it looks as if we are picturing human beings as partly in nature and partly outside it' (McDowell 1996, 77). Conceptualism specifies that the space of reasons 'has a sort of autonomy' (McDowell 1996, 92). But the common sense naturalism that it accepts as default demands an integration of that space into nature. So the solution McDowell develops is a kind of 'relaxed naturalism' (McDowell 1996, 89) or 'naturalized Platonism' (McDowell 1996, 92), whereby the conceptual ties into nature through the natural potential for *Bildung* we are born with. This is why McDowell fancies the Aristotelean idea of humans as 'rational animals'. On McDowell's view, we are precisely rational *animals,* that is: in the first place natural beings (McDowell's naturalism), but qualified as rational (the 'Platonism' which is tied into nature).

The notion of *Bildung* serves to account for the natural development of our second nature out of our first nature. It is an actualization of 'potentialities we are born with' (McDowell 1996, 88). We are thus, on McDowell's account, in the end natural beings, albeit ones who are born with a natural capacity for a non-natural second nature. Apart from a few marginal remarks on cultural upbringing and language, McDowell, however, is rather silent about how the process of *Bildung* would develop. Yet to characterize his account as 'sketchy and unsystematic' is, he contends, to miss his point (McDowell 1996, 178). Ultimately, or so he appears to conclude, *Bildung* must remain shrouded in mystery. The very question what constitutes the space of reasons deserves nothing more than a 'shrug of the shoulders' (McDowell 1996, 178).

So far for McDowell's picture of reasons, nature, and *Bildung*. My comparison of this account to Husserl here focuses on four fundamental points of divergence. These are: (i) the naturalism McDowell accepts as default, (ii) the very *philosophical* endeavor to try to tie reasons into nature, (iii) McDowell's restriction of reasons exclusively to concepts, and (iv) his positing of all low-level (passive) sense-making in the realm of natural-scientific explanation (I turn to a fifth point in the following section).

Let me start with the first: (i) the naturalism which McDowell accepts as default. As McDowell expresses at various places, his conceptualism should be regarded as a kind of *quietism*. The idea of a naturalized Platonism (the space of reasons is *sui generis* yet tied into nature through *Bildung*) is 'not a label for a bit of constructive philosophy' (McDowell 1996, 95). It is, allegedly, only 'shorthand for a 'reminder', an attempt to recall our thinking from running into grooves that make it look as if we need constructive philosophy'.

From a Husserlian point of view, this suggestion should strike us as rather naïve. To be sure, naturalism might seem *common sense* to McDowell. But common sense is not the equivalent of quietism. Naturalism certainly is not a metaphysically neutral position, and so neither could naturalized Platonism be. When McDowell privileges our natural being by specifying that we are rational *animals* (natural beings *with* second nature), he privileges nature. McDowell's conceptualism is subsequent on this acceptance of naturalism. It is motivated by a conception of spaces of reasons and nature which assumes that naturalism is the fundamentally correct worldview, and then establishes the need of a philosophical account of how the space of reasons ties into that.

This brings me to the second, closely related point, namely (ii) the very philosophical endeavor of specifying that and how reasons tie into nature. Substantial parts of *Mind and World* are concerned with that tie, and conceptualism itself serves as a solution within the broader scope of that problem (as a middle ground between bald naturalism and rampant Platonism). The question to consider is whether we can really square either (i) or (ii) – let alone both – with McDowell's self-proclaimed quietist philosophical approach. In other words, we should ask whether naturalism is the exclusive or even an appropriate candidate for a philosophical quietism, and whether the very task of tying reasons into nature is a (quietist) philosophical one at all.

Husserl, as should be clear from earlier discussions in this chapter, is not a naturalist. This is not to say that Husserl denies the legitimacy of natural-scientific investigations into nature. His philosophy rather specifies that in the final

account natural-scientific investigations of reality can be brought back to concatenations of transcendental consciousness. In other words, Husserl's philosophy is a form of absolute idealism which includes the positing of nature and scientific inquiries erected upon that in the total space of transcendental consciousness. Yet simultaneously, Husserl thinks this position does not commit him to a dogmatic form of metaphysics. Instead, the phenomenological viewpoint should accommodate doing philosophy at its best: the mere description, unbiased and without extrinsic motives, of the ways in which things are manifest, and the systematic delineation of such ways in conformity with their own essence.

Importantly, on this picture, questions pertaining to whether and how consciousness would tie into nature can never become *philosophical* problems. For Husserl, consciousness's place in physical nature is not a problem of philosophy; it is plainly one of the sciences of nature. This means that the kind of tie McDowell is after and which partially motivates his conceptualism is in fact not a philosophical concern for Husserl at all. To be sure, philosophy (phenomenology), on Husserl's understanding, can show, among others, that consciousness and nature each have their own essence and that they thereby have their own research programs. Furthermore, it can show the extent to which the scientific enterprises of consciousness and nature can approximate each other. These are all strictly philosophical matters, because they concern the fundamental ways in which transcendental consciousness constitutes its objects through experience.

Yet in spite of these possibilities, philosophy cannot make understandable consciousness's integration into natural reality, and it should not even purport to develop a philosophy inspired by such concerns. This is because such questions simply belong to the regions of sciences studying nature, not to philosophy. Philosophy does not demand an answer as to whether and how our thoughts 'supervene' on or otherwise relate to nature.[81] That is a question only an investigation into nature could clarify. To take it as a philosophical concern is essentially misguided; it distorts philosophy by naturalistic motives that are external to its own proper region, which is transcendentally constituting

[81] I agree with Bridges (2008) that McDowell does not introduce *Bildung* to *explain* that process of development, which is a question of science or perhaps philosophy of mind. But that point should be irrelevant to my criticism here, which is aimed at the fact that McDowell thinks his philosophy must address that very question in the first place. See also Gaskin (2006) for a different critique of McDowell's concept of *Bildung*.

consciousness (the way the world is given to or accomplished through experience).

To clarify this a bit further: naturalism, from a Husserlian point of view, can be considered a 'theory' in the broadest sense of the term. Our experience indeed accomplishes the independently-being-there of the world. This is ultimately, however, an accomplishment of our experience, and it is essentially inconceivable that it will ever be more than that. This is why Husserl regards the real being of the world as *relative* and not as *absolute*. The reality of the world is a kind of 'claim' experience makes for which there is no absolute certainty, as reality is always relative to consciousness. Now philosophy (taken as a serious, first philosophy, for Husserl the only kind of philosophy) can explain how this 'claim' comes about; how consciousness comes to transcend itself in its comportments toward the world. It can do so by focusing exclusively on absolute consciousness through which the relative reality-sense is accomplished.

By contrast, it would on the same picture be misguided to think that philosophy can or should provide an explanation of how consciousness itself – whether taken as the total unity of pure experience or merely as a conceptual space of reasons – ties into nature. Nature cannot be the starting of a responsible philosophy, because it is a relative, presumptuous starting point. The force of this presumption (that nature would be an appropriate departure point for philosophy) only confuses the true scope of philosophy, namely pure, world-constituting consciousness studied in absolute freedom from bias.

To sum up these first two points, McDowell's conceptualism is motivated by a naturalism which on Husserl's view is not the state of a true philosophy or quietism. The very endeavor on which McDowell embarks would be essentially misguided because it seeks a philosophical answer to a question that is not philosophical. Furthermore, this naturalistic motive as one external to the proper region of philosophy can easily lead to a distortion of the actual phenomenology of experience. It may bring about temptations originating outside of the domain of philosophy which can result in false constructions of the perception-reason relation to support a pre-accepted scientific picture of our place in the world.

This brings me to the third point: (iii) McDowell's restriction of reasons exclusively to concepts. I already briefly touched upon this issue in *Chapter 2*. On McDowell's view, the only thing that can figure in the space of reasons is something of a conceptual kind. As he puts it, 'if experiences are extra-conceptual, they cannot be what thoughts are rationally based on' (McDowell 1996, 68). Or again: 'We cannot really understand the relations in virtue of which

a judgment is warranted except as relations within the space of concepts' (McDowell 1996, 7). This idea is crucial to conceptualism, as it ensures that 'so long as a passive operation of conceptual capacities is not in view as an option, one *cannot even try* to cast experience as a rational constraint on empirical thinking' (McDowell 1996, 67 my italics). In other words, because McDowell accepts that only concepts figure as reasons, the only way left to maintain a rational constraint from experience is to endow it with conceptual content.

Clearly, as *Chapter 3* elaborately showed, this idea does not figure in Husserl's phenomenology. For Husserl, thoughts or signitive acts are not necessarily about ideal contents – and certainly only rarely about concepts. Acts of meaning can also be directed at things constituted through acts of simple perception, as in saying 'this is a blackbird'. To be sure, McDowell also thinks this is possible. The disagreement is rather that Husserl sees no reason to specify such a perceptual judgment as wholly contained in a space of concepts. The same applies to all other types of epistemic warrant intuitive acts may provide. There is, within Husserl's framework, no good reason to specify processes of fulfillment as occurrences within an exclusively conceptual space, plainly because the phenomenology of fulfillment does not impose that demand. In other words: McDowell works with a mainstream twentieth century conception of the sorts of things that can justify beliefs, and this comes at the cost of an adequate description of the way we actually justify beliefs.

From this third difference we can move to the fourth, related point: (iv) McDowell's positing of all lower-level sense-making in the realm of natural-scientific explanation. The fact that for McDowell, as we just saw, only concepts figure in the space of reasons provides a clear mark for differentiating the spaces of reasons and nature. This sharp demarcation becomes even clearer once we look at McDowell's thoughts on non-rational animals. 'Dumb animals', McDowell writes, 'are natural being and no more'; they are 'entirely contained within nature'; their 'sensory interactions with their environment are natural goings-on' (McDowell 1996, 70). Elsewhere, he notes that the 'merely biological […] clearly includes the second-natural dispositions and performances of trained dogs' (McDowell 2006b, 236). Or again: 'Apart from how it [a dog's act of rolling over after it has been conditioned to do so] originates, the second nature of dogs is just like their first nature' (McDowell 1999, 98).

I will not try to make a point about McDowell's views on animal consciousness here. What matters is that he sees the lower-level accomplishments of consciousness generally as encompassed entirely in the sphere of intelligibility

belonging to natural science. The case differs only for humans: since we 'acquire conceptual powers, our lives come to embrace not just coping with problems and exploiting opportunities, constituted as such by *immediate biological imperatives*, but exercises of spontaneity' (McDowell 1996, 115 my italics). Clearly, McDowell believes the conscious life of animals to be governed by 'immediate biological imperatives', matters which can be accounted for entirely by natural science, whereas there are *only* '*some* second-natural phenomena that […] natural science cannot accommodate, on the ground that their intelligibility is of the special [conceptual] space-of-reasons kind' (McDowell 2006b, 236 my italics). In short, only the conceptual contents of consciousness are not explainable in terms belonging to the realm of law; all the rest belongs to natural science.

Even disregarding Husserl's views, I would suspect that McDowell's commitment to an exclusively conceptual structure of the space of reasons blocks him from the desired integration of reasons into nature. As we have seen, McDowell's common sense naturalism demands an integration of second nature into first nature, to which end the notion of *Bildung* serves. However, it seems his own construal of spaces prevents that ambiguous concept from serving its purpose. Since the conceptual is *sui generis*, and not explainable in terms of natural science, the whole genesis of the conceptual out of the natural instantly becomes absurd. Although McDowell is somewhat aware of this, and concludes that this question of integration is not worth more than a 'shrug of the shoulders' (McDowell 1996, 178), his conceptualist theory is nonetheless framed as an attempt to address this problem. The notion of *Bildung,* in fact, speaks to this concern directly, and its ambiguous and hardly specified character could be taken as a sign of a dubious position McDowell worked himself into. Certainly recourse to a supposed 'quietism' or 'shrug of the shoulders' cannot be taken very seriously as solutions to this philosophical problem.

The same issue can also be illustrated through Husserl. From Husserl's point of view, McDowell's way of exploiting the distinction between first and second nature could be said to rest on a scientific bias inherited from the same empiricist tradition McDowell is critical of. For Husserl, the distinction betrays the inability to see the *unity of conscious life* throughout both its subjective and objective aspects, between its lower level 'natural' accomplishments and its higher level 'rational' ones. Husserl, in fact, criticizes traditional psychology roughly for a picture similar to the one McDowell commits to. As Husserl notes, the main mistake of naturalistic psychology is 'that it posited the passivity of association and of the whole psychic life unfolding without the activity of the I at the same level with

the passivity of the physical natural process' (Husserl 2004a, 333). 'However', Husserl continues, 'passive motivation is, like all spiritual causality [...] a sphere of understandability standing under pure essential laws and, therefore, having a completely different meaning than natural causality and natural lawfulness'.

What Husserl suggests is basically that the structure of that space which cannot be made understandable in terms of the kind of intelligibility that belongs to the realm of law is not marked exclusively by conceptual or higher level cognitive activity. Whereas for McDowell only the conceptual cannot be accommodated by natural science and therefore belong to the special space of reasons, Husserl objects that the very distinction between supposed natural contents of consciousness and higher level contents of the space-of-reasons kind is artificial. There is no way to limit questions of consciousness or reason to a conceptual sphere and to demarcate that from lower level accomplishments. For Husserl, *no* accomplishment of consciousness can be made understandable from within the space of nature.

This is not to deny that there is *something* to consciousness which natural science could principally make understandable. Phenomenology itself reveals that consciousness is essentially tied to physical bodies, appearing together with organic bodies whenever we apprehend it (Husserl 1980, 60-95; see also Bernet 2013). This fact enables correlational studies of the mind and the physical and to some extent understanding the former through the latter, as the sciences purport to. Yet such an understanding, Husserl submits, will never be able to give us the full story about consciousness. In fact, strictly speaking, it will give us no story about consciousness's own being at all.

The main argument Husserl has for this position can be reconstructed as follows. According to Husserl, transcendental consciousness constitutes consciousness as a region of being that is distinct from physical, spatiotemporal objects. What this basically means is that if we reflect upon objects as they are given to us without any prejudices, we notice that we frequently adopt a stance through which certain objects are given in such a way that they do not seem to belong to the causal nexus of natural reality. Thoughts, intentions, affections, etc. as elements of the mind's life appear at best to correlate with causal events. This is simply how certain things are by their essence given to us. Of course, one can still choose to 'maintain dead silence about the psyche, one can scornfully designate it as a façon de parler' (Husserl 1980, 17). But Husserl thinks such reductionism amounts to denying 'the dominant thing in the apprehension'. Free of all prejudice (the state of a genuine quietism, perhaps), we see that the mind

simply and truly is something given to us with its own essential characteristics, and therefore it is a region of being of its own that deserves its own science.

Husserl, then, does not deny that natural science can integrate the mind into their way of understanding reality. But this does not imply that the mind is or could be entirely or even partially subsumed into its regional ontology. By analogy, the fact that exact science can measure the shape of a tiger does not make the tiger an object of exact science and less an object of biological inquiry. The same goes, Husserl maintains, for our intentional or 'spiritual' life. As Husserl notes in *Ideas II*, science has its way of dealing with the intentional life: "I move my hand, I move my foot' is a process that is psychophysically intertwined, a process that is to be explained in a real-causal manner within the nexus of psychophysical reality'. But as he then continues: '*Here* however [in phenomenology], we are not concerned with this real psychophysical process but with the intentional relation. I, the subject, move my hand, and what this is in the subjective mode of consideration excludes all recourse to brain processes, nerve processes, etc.' (Husserl 2000, 229).

It follows that the problem of the body and sensibility from within the scope of nature is, for Husserl, less a matter of how it *can* be understood than of how it *ought* to be. Put differently, plain sensibility can principally be understood naturalistically. The question, however, is whether that would ever give us the complete story about it. It seems there is, in fact, nothing in Husserl's philosophy that would prevent the possibility that *all* aspects of the mind's life (including conceptual activity) can somehow in the future be grounded in correlational studies of the physical. There is, in terms of the intelligibility belonging to nature, no radical distinction to be made within the contents of consciousness. Simultaneously, however, Husserl holds that the whole streaming life of consciousness must be said to have its own essence, from the conceptual all the way down into the operations of passive sensibility, and that consciousness must be understood in conformity with that essence if true intelligibility is to be acquired.

Of course, Husserl's views on epistemology fit his phenomenological understanding of consciousness and of the ontology of nature. As I show in detail in *Chapter 6* and *7*, passive, non-conceptual sensibility has an important role to play in Husserl's theory of justification (we already saw hints of this in the notion of hyle in *Chapter 4*). As Husserl puts it at one point: 'Passive motivation is the mother soil of knowledge' (Husserl 2004a, 332). Rather than reducing the non-rational life of consciousness to an intelligibility that belongs to nature,

which amounts to a conflation of essence (or more colloquially a 'category mistake'), passive consciousness must be incorporated in a complete story of our responsiveness to reasons.

To conclude: McDowell's philosophy rests on (i) a prior acceptance of naturalism as the obviously correct worldview, it (ii) involves a philosophical attempt to integrate reasons into that worldview through *Bildung*, (iii) it identifies the space of reasons with the space of concepts, and (iv) claims that all lower-level accomplishments of consciousness are purely natural. All four points are essential to the philosophical background onto which McDowell develops his conceptualist theory, yet none of them is accepted (to the contrary, all are contested) by Husserl's philosophy.

### *5.2.2. Externalism and Cartesian Theaters: McDowell and Husserl*

In the previous section I recapitulated McDowell's position on the relation between first and second nature as outlined in the fourth lecture of *Mind and World*. I argued among others that his position, in spite of reference to a notion of *Bildung,* ultimately cannot shed light precisely on that which the term is called to life for, namely the *genesis* of a self-enclosed, conceptual space of reasons from a natural sensibility. Husserl's phenomenology, by contrast, which takes recourse to the whole streaming life of consciousness rather than just to the conceptual space of reasons, can venture the clarification of a genesis of reason. This transcendental-phenomenological genesis will be the central concern of the final two chapters. In the current section, I first turn to a fifth point of comparison: (v) McDowell's criticism of internalism. I develop the argument that Husserl's picture does not fall prey to the kind of critique of internalism McDowell voices. To the contrary, it allows for a more radical and consistent externalization of the whole life of consciousness, rather than just the conceptual space of reasons.

McDowell's central aim in *Mind and World* is to defend a conceptualist thesis about the contents of experience. Put as simple as possible, his claim is roughly that ascribing conceptual content to perceptual experience allows for avoiding a non-conceptual Given (a kind of bare, uninformed sense datum) that would mediate the 'space of reasons' and outer reality. At the same time, by maintaining a notion of intuition (or perception) as in Kant, we can preserve the idea of a touch of our senses upon external reality, thus avoiding coherentism and versions of Cartesian internalism. So while intuition preserves a touch of our senses upon an external world, the conceptual content of intuition avoids commitment to the

Given.

But this very same conceptualist thesis can also be specified in externalist terms (see also *Chapter 2*).[82] In an essay from 1986, McDowell explains his position by juxtaposing it to Descartes. Although McDowell does not put it in exactly these terms, he is out to oppose the traditional correspondence theory of truth expressed as *veritas est adequatio rei et intellectus*.[83] Correspondence theory rests on an underlying conception of mind and world as distinct realms of being that can come to agreement in judgment, a picture McDowell wants to challenge. Skeptical doubt and the discovery of an apodictically knowable inner realm led Descartes to construe this picture (at least at some point in his *Meditations*) in terms of a mind that stands over against a world wholly external to it.

McDowell subsequently contests that this last move (toward self-containment of the mind) is necessary. According to McDowell, we do not have to think of the newly discovered space of absolute certainty as giving us the full story about reasons and knowledgeable experience (McDowell 1986, 150). The Cartesian picture suggests, on McDowell's reading, that there are no facts about the supposedly 'inner realm' besides what is infallibly given. But, he contests, there is no good reason to restrict the sphere of knowledge to that of absolute certainty. The space of reasons must be construed as broader than the inner realm Descartes specifies: it should be taken to 'incorporate […] the relevant portions of the 'external' world' (McDowell 1986, 167).

The picture McDowell purports to establish through this comparison is one on which the successful formation of a judgment of perception does not consist of a match between an inner space of beliefs and an outer realm of empirical being. Instead, prior to active judgment, the perceived outer realm is already thoroughly invested by conceptual capacities. The objects we form judgments about cannot be considered apart from our rational faculties. Objects of perception are shaped by and a part of the space of reasons as much as our 'inner' beliefs are.

McDowell's conceptualism, then, qualifies as a kind of epistemological externalism, more precisely as an externalization of the space of reasons. Interestingly, Husserl in his *Cartesian Meditations* criticizes Descartes for not altogether different reasons than those reflected in McDowell's essay. Descartes's

[82] McDowell's version of externalism has to be understood as one highly specified form of externalism. It is not closely affiliated with the more famous semantic externalism as developed by Putnam (1975).

[83] Truth is a correspondence between the thing and intellect.

meditations, Husserl notes, first digress into solipsism (Husserl 1973a, 45). After this solipsistic *ego cogito* has been secured, Descartes is looking for ways to 'axiomatically' deduce the existence of external reality back from it again (*via* the proofs of the existence of God). By having first rescued the pure *ego cogito* from radical doubt, Descartes thinks he has saved 'a little *tag-end of the world*', after which he only has to 'infer the rest of the world by rightly conducted arguments' (Husserl 1973a, 63).

Descartes's strategy for deduction is, Husserl thinks, biased by the ideal of mathematical natural science rising in his day. Radical as his doubt may have been, Descartes implicitly assumes that deductive argument is the right tool to bring the world back into view again. For that reason, Descartes cannot make 'the greatest of all discoveries': he fails to see that the scope of the realm of certainty extends – in a certain way – into the external world. While the real being of the world, as radical doubt has shown, is necessarily uncertain (its negation can after all be conceived in doubt), we can still maintain *the world and its sense of reality as it is posited in my experience* within the appearance-reality of consciousness. The true realm of absolute certainty – the scope of transcendental consciousness – does not coincide with the formal 'I think': it incorporates the full *sense* of reality and everything that we call 'real' exactly as posited in experience.

The kind of consciousness Husserl retrieves – transcendental consciousness – is therefore not solipsistic in the Cartesian sense. In fact, Husserl maintains that by reducing the non-apodictic positing of reality to indubitable appearance-reality, nothing has changed (in the metaphysical sense discussed earlier) about the reality we had before, as it never was more than given to consciousness. Husserl claims that by performing the phenomenological reduction, 'we have not lost anything' about the world had before, but have only added a 'specifically peculiar mode of consciousness […] to the original positing [of reality]' (Husserl 1983, 113). McDowell, of course, never makes this move which marks Husserl's transcendental turn. McDowell does not at any point suggest the indubitability of the totality of appearance-reality and the possibility of phenomenologically reducing reality as we normally understand it to that. Yet the end results are similar at least in this respect: both externalize consciousness beyond the inner Cartesian theatre.

On Husserl's account, then, transcendental consciousness is not restricted to an inner sphere; it incorporates the ego-subject and the world as it appears. The space of possible consciousness cannot be an internal matter if there is nothing radically beyond it. This view, elaborated in the first part of this chapter, allows

Husserl to construe the reciprocal determinations of subject and world in ways similar to McDowell. Subject and world, as Zahavi puts it in his reading of Husserl, are 'bound constitutively together' (Zahavi 2008a, 364, see also Zahavi 2004). Or to quote Husserl directly: 'concepts are not just our business', they rather 'belong to the world […], are intrinsic to its very being' as much as they belong to us (Husserl 2001b, 92). The world we see is always already 'impregnated by the precipitate of logical operations' (Husserl 1997a, 42).

But the kind of externalization Husserl seems to endorse goes further than McDowell. This is because the mutually constitutive bond of mind and world on Husserl's picture is not restricted to the conceptual sphere alone as it is with McDowell. As we saw previously, for Husserl, the space of reasons cannot be isolated from (what on McDowell's picture are supposedly natural) lower-level non-conceptual capacities. For that reason, the externalization we find in phenomenology does not need to be restricted to concepts, but can in principle include the whole of the pure streaming life of consciousness.

An example of externalism beyond the space of concepts can be drawn from Husserl's views on kinaesthetics in *Ideas II*. According to Husserl, even prior to the involvement of conceptual capacities, the lived body and sensed world are already co-productive in a mere kinaesthetic consciousness. In describing the course of tactile perception, Husserl notes there is always an interplay of *motivating* bodily sensations and *motivated* sensations that are interpreted as the features of sensed objects. When, for instance, I touch an object with my hand, I both touch it and it touches me. In other words, the very same sensations produced in this contact are as a rule two-sided: they index me as the touching (motivating) as well the thing as the being touched (motivated). The point is that even in the simplest form of sensory interaction, both a minimal self-production and a primordial sense of world-having are involved. From the very bottom up, consciousness goes hand in hand with a minimal world-having. Externalism, therefore, need not solely concern a conceptual of reasons.

### *5.2.3. Concluding Remarks*

This chapter focused on the phenomenological method and Husserl's transcendental-idealist views. I showed that his efforts primarily aim at securing the pure stream of consciousness in its completeness, the unbiased study of which is regarded the proper field of philosophy. The second part then compared this reading to aspects of McDowell's philosophy. Here I focus on five crucial

points of divergence: (i) the naturalism McDowell accepts as default, (ii) the philosophical attempt to show how reasons tie into nature, (iii) the restriction of reasons to concepts, (iv) the ascription of non-rational conscious life to natural science, and (v) the externalist account of reasons. On all points, Husserl diverges from McDowell, can be read to offer sustained alternatives, and frequently even as giving viable explanations of how McDowell is led to his views through predominantly naturalistic assumptions.

In the final two chapters, I turn to Husserl's so-called genetic phenomenology, which differs from the earlier 'static' phase in that it seeks to phenomenologically clarify the 'genesis' of reason. This search for a genesis amounts to showing how our passive (sensory and perceptual-kinetic) dealings with the world condition active (acts of judgment) synthesis. In *Chapter 6,* I first focus on Husserl's detailed analyses of perceptual synthesis and the way in which Husserl thinks it conditions rationality. *Chapter 7* then deals with the phenomenology of judgment as well as the crucial role habits play (the lasting impact of conceptual and pre-conceptual capacities) in perception – a concern closely related to the full conceptualist thesis.

# Chapter 6. Genesis of Reason: Passive Synthesis

*Chapter Summary*
In his later work, Husserl turns to the analysis of passive experience in search of a 'genesis' of reason. Whereas the next chapter deals with conceptual activity and its tacit impact upon perception, this chapter deals exclusively with the passive field of perception prior to judgment. The later Husserl distinguishes various hierarchically ordered layers of perceptual accomplishment in accordance with their phenomenological complexity. I discuss the three most important layers here. The first (i) consists of so-called fields of sense, which Husserl specifies as a form of non-intentional, affective content synthesized by a law of immanent association. From this 'background' awareness he moves to (ii) simple apprehension, characterized as the most basic intentional act through which a unitary thing presents itself. Third, (iii) perceptual explication allows for a prefiguring of predicative relations in perception prior to the advent of any functions of thought. In the second part, I also discuss the role of horizons, action, and the body in the passive perceptual process, and consider Husserl' ideas about perception's inherent goal-directedness.

## 6.1. Pre-Intentional Perception

### *6.1.1. Introduction and Overview of the Chapter*

But for the peculiarity of our understanding […] a further ground may be offered just as little as one can be offered for why we have precisely these and no other functions of judgment or for why space and time are the sole forms of our possible intuition (Kant – CPR 146)

The fragment above stems from Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*.[84] In it, Kant testifies to the boundaries of his method of transcendental investigation. Kant believed that no further transcendental reflection could ever yield a deeper understanding as to the why and how of our pure concepts and intuitions. The reason Kant thought so is that he considered these pure forms to be *a priori*, that is, not derived from experience. Therefore, on his account, a 'genesis' of pure concepts from concrete receptive experience cannot be given, since that harbors only empirical, *a posteriori* contingencies.

In *Chapter 5*, I showed that Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, by contrast, aims at securing the entire streaming unity of consciousness, which

[84] Large parts of this chapter have been published in *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* in a paper entitled: 'Kant and Husserl on the contents of perception', see: Van Mazijk (2016b).

includes, in its final sense, the world in itself. Husserl thinks Kant somewhat approached a pure phenomenological science of consciousness especially in his A-Deduction. According to Husserl he could not, however, recognize his own efforts there as such. Instead, biased by Newtonian science, Kant wrongly restricted the concept of *a priori* to the exact sciences,[85] thereby failing to see the very possibility of an *a priori* transcendental clarification of the *whole* streaming life of consciousness – and subsequently ended up rejecting his own A-Deduction as subjective-psychological (see Husserl 1976, 93-120; 1984, 731-732; 2000, 22; 2001, 170-174).

The previous chapter also addressed McDowell's theory of the relation between first and second nature. I argued that his position, in spite of reference to a notion of *Bildung*, ultimately cannot shed any light precisely on that problem which the term is called to life for – namely the *genesis* of a self-enclosed[86], conceptual space of reasons from a natural sensibility. This is, I claimed, not a shortcoming of the notion of *Bildung*, but rather a problem pertaining to the very conceptual set-up of the problem in McDowell's philosophy. Just as Kant, although for different reasons, McDowell cannot offer a satisfying explanation of how reasons tie into nature, even though his own philosophy seems to demand it (unlike in Kant's case, where the possibility of a genetic transcendental account of pure concepts is discarded).

This makes Husserl's phenomenological framework the only one which does allow for a clarification of a genesis of reason. This is because, as I previously showed, Husserl takes the whole stream of pure consciousness as point of departure, and seeks not to transgress those boundaries by any naturalistic motivations. In this chapter and the following one, I show how Husserl conceived of this phenomenological genesis. In some later writings, particularly *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis* (1918-1926), *Formal and Transcendental Logic* (1929) and *Experience and Judgment* (1939)[87], Husserl ventures a so-called genetic phenomenology. In these works, the very task of a transcendental clarification of knowledge is reconceived explicitly in terms of a search for its genesis. Moreover, by his own admittance, Husserl came to regard the genetic project as of greater importance than the one guiding earlier work (now called 'static phenomenology').

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[85] Husserl refers to Kant's notion of *a priori* as a 'half-mythical' construct, see: Husserl (1974b, 13).
[86] I am referring to the fact that for McDowell justification can only be understood as relations among concepts, see *Chapter 2*.
[87] Respectively Husserl (2001a; 1974a; 1997a).

In *Logical Investigations* as well as in *Ideas I* (see *Chapter 3* and *4*), Husserl turned to the general structures of intentionality for a deeper understanding of knowledge and meaning. Here already, he conceived of intentional acts as being founded upon one another. Certain accomplishments of consciousness – feeling acts, categorial judgments, eidetic judgments, or acts of feeling, among others – are necessarily founded on simpler acts of object-directedness. The idea of analyzing consciousness's way of accomplishing its world in a *stratified* manner is thus already present in Husserl's thinking from early on.

The key difference with the later genetic work is, however, that Husserl now thinks a clarification of knowledge and being should focus specifically on how lower-level accomplishments of consciousness *make possible* the higher ones. Genetic phenomenology, then, generally speaking seeks to clarify the conditions of possibility of conceptual thought in so-called pre-predicative experience. The central question that concerns Husserl is how one type of accomplishment offers the ground for another higher type of constitution. Only the total elucidation of this hierarchically structured network will then bring clarity to logical thought and the possibility of *a priori* knowledge.

A few remarks on the methodology of genetic phenomenology are in place here. There is no unanimous agreement among scholars regarding how exactly to interpret the genetic phenomenological method of inquiry. It is useful to at least distinguish between two notions of 'genesis' which are generally used equivocally. In the first sense commonly referred to, genealogy points to the storied structure of consciousness just as I spoke of it up until now. Broadly speaking, what defines the position of an accomplishment here within the hierarchy of possible constitutions is the *degree of ego-participation*.[88] Conceptual thought can then be seen as the upper ('ego-active') structure of consciousness, which is built upon structures of ordinary perceptual experience (a 'receptive ego', which is 'awake' but 'lets in' rather than 'acts upon'), which in turn are supported by entirely passive accomplishments ('pre-egoic', perceptual-kinetic awareness). These three fundamental layers of accomplishment correspond very roughly to what we would ordinarily call thought, simple perception, and sensibility.

The standard reading represents the central task of genetic phenomenology: to

[88] The interpretation I here offer of passivity and activity disagrees with Yamaguchi's (1982), who claims that the terms match Husserl's distinction in *Logical Investigations* between sensible and categorial intuition. I think this is an over-simplification. On my reading, the degree of ego-awareness and ego-participation in acts forms the defining element in this fundamental distinction.

differentiate the accomplishments of consciousness in terms of complexity or ego-activity, and to show how higher-level ones are conditioned by simpler ones. This approach is also reflected in the order of analysis in both *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis* and *Experience and Judgment*. They start with purely passive sensibility and from there build up toward simple perception, categorial intuition, and finally to the (various levels of) apprehension of essences. I follow this outline over the course of this chapter and the first half of *Chapter 7*.

But there is also a second – what we might call 'diachronic' – sense to Husserl's genetic investigations. On the diachronic reading, genealogy points to the role past experiences have in present acts of consciousness. This is due to what Husserl calls 'sedimentation', 'habitualization', or simply *habit* (Husserl 1997a, 121-127). The diachronic reading basically concerns the role learning processes have for consciousness. It is, therefore, a kind of phenomenology of *Bildung*. On Husserl's account, habit is important for instance in explaining skillful coping (e.g. driving a car), but also more generally in the pre-given familiarity of things we encounter, and even in the basic causal and three-dimensional order of the pre-given world.

We thus have a standard reading of the term genesis, which provides the overall structure to Husserl's genetic work, and a diachronic reading, which refers to how the habitual development of consciousness shapes its current accomplishments. Importantly, neither of these dimensions actually pertains to consciousness's past in the ordinary sense of that term. Put more precisely, Husserl is not concerned with the empirical (ontogenetic) process of growing up. Phenomenology only takes the immediate givenness of experience as its source of knowledge; it does not speculate about the structure of experience in childhood.[89] The search for genesis, which starts with tactile-kinesthetic or sensory consciousness and builds up through simple perception to judgmental acts, at best parallels the empirical-developmental process of growing up. Husserl's analyses, however, are exclusively the result of direct phenomenological reflection.[90]

[89] Barber (2008) and Mooney (2010) appear to hint at such a reading of Husserl's genetic phenomenology. I have addressed their views elsewhere, see Van Mazijk (2014b).

[90] In genetic phenomenology, the method of reflection onto lower-level accomplishments involves a certain bracketing of all higher ego-activities that usually intertwine with passive performances, in order to reflect on the productions of an originally passive consciousness (Husserl 1997a, 56). This extensive bracketing does not suggest that we are reflecting on an imagined, childlike consciousness, which would lie beyond the immediate givenness provided by our own experiences. Passive synthesis and passive habits are no abstractions, but are still fully

Genetic phenomenology – especially in its standard sense – contrasts sharply with the kind of approach to perception characterizing Kantian philosophy, including McDowell's. In transcendental phenomenology, it is less the form of understanding which shapes our sensibility – as for instance in Kant's top-down determination of perception through pure concepts – than the structures of sensibility which determine the understanding. This is partially due to the fact that Husserl's later interest in perception does not, as with Kant and McDowell, originally stem from the idea that perception *belongs* to the space of reasons. Instead, for the later Husserl, it is perception's place at the very *genesis* of the space of reasons that marks its fundamental epistemological signification. Perception is thus first and foremost analyzed as a network of accomplishments wholly *prior* to reason (hence 'pre-predicative'). Genetic phenomenology, then, in contrast with a full conceptualist approach to perception, endeavors first of all to explain, reversely, how conceptual thought originates out of passive perception.

At the same time, as the second part of *Chapter 7* will explore, Husserl's later writings reveal a deep appreciation for the way both pre-conceptually and conceptually originating habits structure perception (the 'diachronic' reading). Genetic phenomenology does not simply subscribe to bottom-up relations of foundation between perception and judgment. Both conceptual and pre-conceptual habits determine the structure of perception throughout, which could bring Husserl closer to supporting some form of full conceptualism. Thus, whereas this chapter reflects a more bottom-up account of how perception determines thought, the final chapter reveals a much more holistic picture of the perception-judgment relation. These two readings do not stand in conflict; they simply reflect to different ways of approaching the same structures of consciousness. In the same way, the static results of *Logical Investigations* and *Ideas I* do not contradict these later approaches, but represent a different strategy for taking on the same problems.

The rest of this chapter focuses only on Husserl's (dazzlingly detailed) genetic analyses of passive perception prior to the activity of judgment (this means both habit and the phenomenology of judgment are discussed in *Chapter 7*). I

operative (Husserl 2001a, 167). Some scholars, in contrast with this reading, suggest that genetic phenomenology contains a radical turn away from the earlier transcendentalism (e.g. Crowell 2012). I do not think this is a tenable suggestion, but the exegetical investigation required to clarify that falls outside of the scope of this chapter. On my reading, all phenomenological reflection is reflection on transcendental consciousness in immediate evidence, and Husserl never abandoned this.

distinguish three levels of perceptual constitution here. First, I discuss the most primitive passive syntheses which constitute 'fields of sense' ruled by so-called 'immanent association'. These fields of sense can broadly be understood as an elaboration of sensations as discussed in *Logical Investigations* or hyle in *Ideas I*. Although fields of sense have a definite structure, they are not intentional – just as in the earlier works. On a second, higher level, certain affections in the background field may come to prominence, thereby 'awaking' the ego-subject and yielding its attention. This constitutes the first kind of intentional perception, called 'simple apprehension' (Husserl 1997a, 104). Here we have an object simply giving itself to us, yet without cognition of a state of affairs being involved. Lastly, the third level concerns the 'perceptual explication' of a feature of a simply apprehended object, such as its color or some independent part of it, again prior to proper acts of judgments.

### *6.1.2. Introduction to Fields of Sense as Pre-Intentional Perceptual Content*

As I speak of it in this chapter, perception points primarily to a rather broad range of accomplishments that produce meaningful and in a sense even cognitive experiences. The various accomplishments of perceptual synthesis are in turn subdivided by Husserl into different strata according to their complexity (the level of ego-activity their production demands). This means there is not one type of perception for Husserl, but instead that a variety of activities goes by that name. In this chapter I divide Husserl's analyses of passive perception into three fundamental and hierarchically ordered forms: (i) fields of sense, (ii) simple apprehension, and (iii) perceptual explication.

It should further be noted before proceeding further that perception for Husserl, already as early as in *Thing and Space* (1907), is essentially entwined with *kinesthesis* or bodily movement.[91] This is in fact crucial for understanding Husserl's whole take on perception. For Husserl, central aspects of perceptual experience – such as its embeddedness in a network of horizonal expectations, the constant feed of affective tendencies, the ongoing striving for fullness and the satisfaction that is subsequent upon achieving that – cannot be conceived of without reference to the possibility for movement. This co-dependency of perception and possible movement is so thorough that the whole process of

[91] Husserl also speaks of their unity as 'the kinesthetic system', see for instance Husserl (1940, 29). This idea has more recently been popularized by among others O'Regan and Noë (2001) and Noë (2004; 2006).

perceiving cannot really be thought of independently of a capacity for movement. I return to these issues toward the end of this chapter as well as in *Chapter 7* where I deal with the phenomenology of habit. The main body of this chapter, however, proceeds to give a more static and systematic (and thus in a sense abstract) account of the contents of perception.

Husserl, as I mentioned, distinguishes between a number of accomplishments that we today might call perceptual. For the sake of his genetic investigations, his examinations begin with the most primitive forms of synthesis perceptual experience involves. Of course, unlike empiricist philosophers, Husserl does not posit bare sense data at the ground level of consciousness functioning like a bridge between the subject and the natural world. This is, first, because the streaming life onto which the phenomenologist reflects encompasses even the (constitution of the) natural world which the empiricist thinks has to be bridged to subjective consciousness. Second, it is because there is phenomenologically speaking no sense to the idea of experiencing data prior to their synthesis. In other words, the idea of a pure sense datum is a theoretical abstraction.

According to one widespread reading, the early Husserl operated with a notion of sense data as completely formless stuff, but later gradually abandoned this view as he came to regard them as inherently structured.[92] I expressed my doubts about this reading before, in part because the early Husserl too claims that sense data have their own determinations (Husserl 1997a, 46-57), whereas at other places he deliberately leaves the matter open (Husserl 1983, 204). A more plausible suggestion would be that the early Husserl focused primarily on intentional acts due to their direct epistemological significance, but later came to better appreciate the importance of pre-rational synthesis in the context of his genetic phenomenology. Husserl, then, did not change his mind about what sensory contents can or cannot do; he simply gained much richer insight into their operations once his research project demanded it.

In his genetic works, Husserl elaborates the idea that the hyletic data (the sensory data directly imprinted upon consciousness) are always already pre-structured into meaningful 'fields of sense' (*Sinnesfeld*) (Husserl 1997a, 72-79), a kind of 'broad lived experiential fields' (Husserl 2001, 18).[93] These fields, Husserl

[92] See particularly Sokolowski (1964), who argues Husserl's studies of time consciousness made him change his mind. Alternative readings include Marcelle (2011), who argues that Husserl's concept of hyletic data undergoes a 'noematization' in later works.

[93] Husserl also speaks of the background field as a radically passive *Urdoxa* (Husserl 1997a, 28-31) a 'background that is prior to all comportment and is instead presupposed by all comportment'

claims, figure at the background of intentional awareness. This suggests we cannot be properly aware *of* them, in the way in which we are aware of objects in our surroundings. The kind of awareness one has of fields of sensations must therefore be very different from the awareness one has of the knowable objects of intentional acts.

Another way to put this difference is to say that passive fields are not intentionally constituted in the way the objects of ordinary perception are. Intentional constitution here refers to the act-structure of consciousness in *Chapter 3,* or the noesis/noema-structure exposed in *Chapter 4*. All intentional constitution involves (i) noetic act-processes, (ii) an ego-subject which is to some degree active or at least 'awake', (iii) a presented content, and a (iv) reference to an object (strictly a part of the presented content). Fields of sense, however, are not noematic. They are not attended to by the ego-subject and are not the result of any noetic act-processes. Instead, as with the account of sensations in the fifth book of *Logical Investigations* and that of hyletic data in *Ideas I*, they form the stuff-strata or 'building blocks' on the basis of which intentional animation is possible. They are, therefore, rightly named non-intentional (or pre-intentional).

It further follows from this that intentionality for Husserl is not *the* mark of the mental, as has been famously suggested in more recent days, particularly by Crane (2003, 2009). Although I think Crane's theory of 'impure intentionalism' (Crane 2009) is relatively speaking close to Husserl's account of intentionality[94], I also believe a Husserlian account of intentionality would have to object to Crane's intentionalist construal of pains and other sensory contents. On the impure intentionalist view, intentionality[95] is the single mark of the mental. Pains and other affective contents must therefore also be understood as inherently object-directed.

On Husserl's account, which he consistently maintained though greatly elaborated over the course of years, things stand quite differently. To be sure, one can direct oneself toward any felt pain, and thereby execute an intentional act with a presented content and a reference to an object (for instance, one's arm which is hurting). Yet Husserl denies that this is all there is to experiencing pain. As *Chapter 4* also explored, Husserl thinks the term sensory experience is ambiguous regarding two different things. In seeing a red apple there is the

(Husserl 2000, 291).

[94] See also Van Mazijk (2016c), where I juxtapose Husserl's theory of intentionality in *Ideas I* to contemporary intentionalist theories.

[95] Crane (2009) understands intentionality in terms of mode, content, and object.

property red of the red apple I see, but there is also the immanent component red as hyletic datum imprinted upon my consciousness. The same goes for pains: while there is – insofar as there is an intentional act at all – the intentional object of pain that I am directed at, there is also the pain 'itself' – not as an objective property, but as my immediate sensory content, that which I 'live through'.

In *Logical Investigations* and *Ideas I*, Husserl was primarily interested in intentional acts. Yet he made it clear that consciousness is not exhausted by object-directedness. Instead, he took intentionality to refer to consciousness 'in the pregnant sense' (Husserl 1983, 199), that is, to objectivating consciousness. Since Husserl's initial concern was intentional consciousness, neither *Logical Investigations* nor *Ideas I* contains extensive analyses of the pre-intentional productions of consciousness. In his later works, Husserl deepens his explorations of the structure of immanent consciousness purely in terms of passive synthesis, that is: without reference to ego-subject, noetic act-processes, presented contents, or objects.

The intentional act of experiencing pain in one's arm is thus executed under certain 'eidetic laws', among which are the essential components of intentional acts in general outlined above. It seems, therefore, that with respect to higher-level intentional acts of pain experience, Husserl could agree with the impure intentionalist account that a mode, presented content, and reference to an object must (among others) be involved. Simultaneously, Husserl would contest that the intentional construal of pain and other sensory content gives us the full story about how we experience it. In fact, the intentional structure of consciousness cannot adequately address precisely that which is distinctive about sensory feelings (their 'phenomenal content'). In other words, the pre-intentional experience of pain or of any other kind of sensory awareness stands under its *own essential laws*. It is these laws I purport to address more fully in what follows.

### *6.1.3. Affection and Immanent Association*

According to Husserl, 'the world is always a world in which cognition in the most diverse ways has already done its work' (Husserl 1997a, 31). The concrete world of experience always contains in its horizonal structure the broader community, the practical activities of other humans (Husserl 2008, 319). The objects of experience are always 'constituent[s] of existence accessible to everyone' (Husserl 1974b, 20). The perceived world is 'impregnated by the precipitate of logical operations' (Husserl 1997a, 42), given to us as 'possible substrates of cognitive

activities' (Husserl 1997a, 37). As *Chapter 7* explores in more detail, this line of thought clearly commits Husserl to some form of conceptualism. The world in which we spend our lives is both open to as well as informed by conceptual capacities and logical operations, which seems to suggest both weak and full conceptualism.

But it is worth noticing that Husserl consistently refers to 'us', 'we', 'conscious experience' or 'cognition' when making these claims. Consider for instance the following fragments:

Everything which […] is a *goal of cognition* is an existent on the ground of the world (Husserl 1997a, 30 my italics)

What *affects us* […] is known […] not merely as an object […] but as a thing – as a man, a human artifact, and so on (Husserl 1997a, 38 my italics)

The world in which *we live* and in which *we carry out activities of cognition and judgment* […] is always already pre-given to us as impregnated by the precipitate of logical operations (Husserl 1997a, 42 my italics)

'For us', Husserl remarks elsewhere, perceiving is a 'kind of suffering' (Husserl 1997a, 60-61); a passively accepting and, in a way, forcefully undergoing of full-blown things giving themselves. In a way, objects of simple perception are even already 'judged' about, to the extent that they are immediately taken to be practical and communal entities (Husserl 1997a, 58-63). The world of ordinary, simple perception bears the marks of thought.

But in all these passages Husserl consistently refers to a restricted domain of consciousness. As with Kant or McDowell, the world of conscious perception for Husserl presents a world of objects to whose essence it belongs that it is open to rationality. This is no different from what Husserl noted in *Ideas I,* namely that any noematic sense is expressable by means of significations (Husserl 1983, 295), or the sixth book of *Logical Investigations*, where objectivating acts are said to be open to expression.

I mention this here only to demarcate these notes on the expressibility of intentional acts (a kind of weak conceptualism) from discussions about fields of sense. The law of the expressibility of intentional acts *cannot* be transposed to fields of sense. These fields are pre-intentionally constituted, and the sorts of contents we find here are no direct substrates for cognitive activity. As Husserl

notes, they constitute a 'more radical passivity' (Husserl 1997a, 60) not brought about through any acts at all, but to a 'background that is prior to all comportment' (Husserl 2000, 291). Simple examples of background fields of sense would be the sensations in one's feet touching the ground or the background noise of one's humming computer, specifically *prior* to giving it any conscious attention. We are thus concerned with the passive pre-structuring of sensation contents into fields before any ego-directedness has taken place.

Let me now turn to the laws of the synthesis of fields of sense. A first characteristic of their structure is *temporality*.[96] Whatever enters experience is temporally synthesized through 'retentions' and 'protentions' that ray backwards and forwards. For instance, any sound we hear already consists of passively synthesized time moments. If we passively perceive a car passing by outside our window while being absorbed in work, we do not just hear an endless stream of unconnected sound data. We also do not hear nothing at all. Instead, a continuous synthesis takes place between the various sound moments; each new moment blends, as it were, with sound-moments that have just past while yielding new protentional expectations regarding sound-moments to come. In this way, the sound is, already in pure passivity, structured as a kind of streaming unity, rather than as a collection of unrelated data.

Yet at the same time, Husserl, following Kant, holds that temporal synthesis only concerns the form of any experience (Husserl 1997a, 73; 2001, 173). It is therefore, at least on Husserl's later views, by itself insufficient to establish any sort of meaningful experience. A second characteristic of fields of sense – this time with regard to their content – is that they have a kind of *felt* or *affective* structure. Consider for instance the sensations of feet touching the floor or of the tongue against the roof of the mouth. These sensations are not just temporally synthesized; they are also *affecting* contents. As such they are capable of *pulling* on the ego-subject, persuading it to turn-toward. If any affective allure is strong enough, it may go on to 'penetrate the ego', thereby 'awakening' it, possibly luring it to direct its attentive regard toward the source of affection. If that happens, a proper intentional act of perception can be first brought about. But none of that, of course, need happen in order for affective fields to be passively accomplished.[97]

It follows that affections, for Husserl, are not some kind of meaningless supervening *surplus* of intentionality. The affections contained in fields of sense

[96] For more on time-consciousness, see De Warren (2009), Kelly (2016), or Husserl (1966).

[97] See also Bower (2014) for his recent take on affectively driven perception in Husserl.

are part of the latter's *sui generis* way of conveying meaning (*sui generis* relative to the intentional production of meaning). Moreover, the affections in fields of sense are not parasitical upon intentionality ('epi-phenomenal'); they are rather *a condition of possibility* for it. Without passively synthesized affective content, Husserl maintains, no intentional act could genetically speaking be brought about in the first place. It is only on the basis of pre-intentionally constituted affective fields of sense that the ego-subject can first be enticed to perform intentional acts.

We have thus far seen that for Husserl immanent data are connected through inner time consciousness to form a field of sensations that contains affective allures in varying strengths which may or may not yield the ego's attention. But this leaves it unanswered by what measure or criterion immanent data get connected to each other in the first place. Temporal synthesis alone does not provide such a criterion; it cannot explain *why* certain data are grouped together. The more complete answer to this question can be found in Husserl's concept of *immanent association* (Husserl 1997a, 74-75).

Immanent association is the central law of pre-intentional synthesis. Although Husserl derives the notion of association from the modern empiricist tradition, it is re-construed by him as having a transcendental function.[98] The general idea here is that the syntheses constitutive of fields of sensations and the affective allures they harbor take place on grounds of the association of data to the extent that they *resemble* or *differ* from one another (Husserl 1997a, 72-76; 2001, 162-214). For instance, a stream of sounds – as opposed to a stream of visual impressions – is passively associated into one field. This means that prior to one's conscious awareness, sound-sensations are connected on ground of resembling each other. This way, a field of sound-sensations is pre-constituted which is distinct from the field of visual impressions (likewise associated on ground of resemblances).

To be sure, we are usually aware only of the kind of attention-driven intentional activities in which 'we' to some degree actively participate. For one, we hardly notice the sensations in our feet as we hastily walk down the streets. Yet Husserl maintains that immanent association is silently doing its work all the time (Husserl 2001, 167). Sensations in our feet are passively synthesized into fields of sense by way of the law of immanent association regardless of whether we notice it or not. We only realize that these fields were there when, for

[98] According to Biceaga, association is one of two main driving forces in passive synthesis, the other one being habitualization (Biceaga 2010, p. xv). I discuss habit in more detail in *Chapter 7*, where I discuss what I call Husserl's diachronic approach.

instance, we step onto a sharp object. Only then a strong affectively allure can rise out of the background field, possibly forcing the ego-subject to turn toward it.

The principle of immanent association can be applied on various different scales. For instance, within a passively synthesized sound field, various data can be pre-structured into subfields on the basis of resemblance and difference, thereby passively distinguishing the humming sound of one's computer from that of a passing car. This way, one can begin to see how the experienced world at large is pre-structured for the ego-subject in pre-intentional ways, thereby laying the ground for the execution of intentional acts through ego-attention.

To summarize this section: fields of sense are genetically speaking the lowest contents produced by consciousness. Their synthesis is distinctively pre-intentional, governed by temporality and the law of immanent association on the basis of likeness and difference between data. The result is content which is specifically affective in structure and without inherent reference to an object. Fields of sense provide a basis for the ego-subject's arousal, which can subsequently execute intentional acts once it has turned-toward the source of affection.

### *6.1.4. Some Further Reflections on the Contents of Fields of Sense*

Fields of sense as I have characterized them so far lack presented contents and a reference to an object. In fact they lack, at least considered for themselves, all reference to intentionality. This is no different from Husserl's earlier construal of hyletic content in *Ideas I* discussed in *Chapter 4*. As I showed there, the hyle considered in isolation has '*nothing pertaining to intentionality*' (Husserl 1983, 203). The presented contents – the things we intend – can only come about through an 'animation' or 'sense-endowing' of the hyle by noetic activities. In his later genetic work, Husserl specifies further that these hyletic data are always already synthesized into affective fields of sense. These fields are now considered the proper 'stuff-stratum' underlying all intentional activity.

The new genetic account offers much better insight into the operations governing hyletic data. In the earlier static phase, Husserl did not really consider an alternative to the model of intentional animation. His preoccupation with higher level acts of intentionality somewhat prevented any substantial advance of insight into the passive life of consciousness. Now, with the theory of affection and immanent association, Husserl is able to shed light onto a previously less

appreciated domain of consciousness. Moreover, the later account of pre-intentional synthesis offers new ways to assess philosophical problems regarding sensation contents and their (non-)conceptual structure. I briefly discuss three of such problems here before turning to the next genetic level of perception.

One problem, already briefly touched upon, concerns how to understand pains and other qualitative content in intentional terms. As I showed previously, since Husserl uses intentionality to analyze the domain of objectivating consciousness (which involves ego-subject, act, content, and reference to object), he does not need to posit objects or even presented contents in all forms of consciousness. This is quite different from more recent intentionalist attempts to account for sensations. The nowadays most widespread form of intentionalism (either its pure or weak variant)[99] submits that the qualitative contents of any given experience can be explained exclusively in terms of *what* is represented in that experience.[100] Crane's (2009) impure intentionalism, on the other hand, specifies that besides representational content (*what* is represented) an intentional mode and also a reference to an object is needed. Although I think of these two accounts Crane's is phenomenologically superior, his specification of sensation contents in intentionalist terms is not convincing from a Husserlian viewpoint. The reading of Husserl I just offered is, I think, better suited to account for the phenomenology of qualitative experiences, precisely because Husserl's account does not rely on intentionality, and therefore does not demand the positing of a presented content and a reference to an intentional object.

Another problem regarding sensation contents is its conceptual or non-conceptual structure. With respect to this issue, I do not think Husserl's later account (at least as discussed so far) differs substantially from the earlier ones. In *Chapter 4,* I claimed that Husserl's notion of hyle in *Ideas I* is non-conceptual. This is because hyletic contents are not themselves concepts (hard conceptualism) and also not open to conceptualization (weak conceptualism). Although hyletic contents make the objects of experience possible as the underlying stratum of intentional animation, they are not themselves presented contents. They are

[99] Whereas strong representationalists such as Tye (1995, 2002) and Lycan (2001) maintain that phenomenal character can be reduced to or is identical with the objective properties represented, weak representationalists hold that the former is determined by or supervenes upon the latter. The dispute is primarily ontological or metaphysical and of little importance in the present context.

[100] I compare this standard form of intentionalism to Husserl's account in *Ideas I* in Van Mazijk (2016c).

'immanent' rather than 'transcendent', and therefore they cannot be possible substrates of cognitive activities. By specifying the laws governing hyle in terms of immanent associative processes Husserl does not seem to depart from this earlier view, although the law of association does flesh out in considerably more detail the earlier, rather vague idea of 'building blocks'.

A third problem regarding sensation contents concerns the myth of the given. It may seem that since fields of sense are non-conceptual and do not belong to the intentional life of the ego proper, they can have no epistemic efficacy. They must, therefore, be irrelevant to any theory of knowledge, and to invoke them anyhow would mean to commit the fallacy of the given. Parts of *Chapter 4* and *5* were dedicated to showing that McDowell's concept of a myth of the given rests on a separation of a conceptual realm which *alone* escapes a second realm of natural-scientific explanation and belongs to the space of reasons. Husserl, however, does not share this conception; his alternative account need not appeal to concepts to *either* guarantee epistemological efficacy *or* to establish a region of consciousness which cannot be captured in natural-scientific terms. For Husserl, the conceptual is not labeled as the one common factor making internal bonds possible in the life of consciousness in which the domain of reason is included. It is rather the very capacity of synthesis which governs all levels of conscious activity and which defines the region of consciousness throughout all its aspects.

Of course a fourth problem remains urgent, namely how exactly fields of sense contribute to the intentional life of consciousness, specifically considering their *sui generis,* pre-intentional structure. Put differently, Husserl still needs to show how intentional acts are possible on the basis of a pre-intentional stratum of sensation contents – something which earlier works such as *Logical Investigations* failed to describe in much detail. More on this will now follow.

## 6.2. Intentional Perception

### *6.2.1. Simple Apprehension*

Over the previous sections, I developed the view that for Husserl passive fields of sense pre-structure the experienced world even though they do not harbor noematic senses. The way they do so is through the law of association and affection. Although fields of sense help in bringing intentional acts about, Husserl does not strictly consider them possible substrates for judgment. In this section, I want to turn to Husserl's theory of simple apprehension and perceptual

explication, which is where Husserl says 'original substrates' are first constituted. Here, possible (in the sense of having the potential to become) unities of judgment first come about (i.e. weakly conceptual contents) in the simple perceptual relation to an individual thing giving itself.

The first two levels of perception in the demanding (intentional) sense are called *simple apprehension* (Husserl 1997a, 103-112) and *explicative contemplation* (Husserl 1997a, 112-148). Husserl also discusses a third, more complex level called *relational contemplation* (Husserl 1997a, 149-194), which I shall mention but not discuss in particular detail.

It is useful to start with simple apprehension and see how it relates to the affective contents formed in fields of sense discussed earlier. Husserl thinks a simple apprehension may come about if a particular affective content in the background starts to stand out and yields perceptual attention. As an example of this, we can imagine hearing a car passing by. Already prior to the attention of the ego-subject, the various sound-moments are pre-structured as belonging together on grounds of being alike to one another. However, the sound will only become an object for a perceptual consciousness if it is apprehended by the ego-subject. This may happen when the immanently structured sound yields an affective allure strong enough to awaken the ego's attention. For one, there is a sudden increase in the intensity of the sound. A turning-toward of the ego may now follow; the ego has been 'awakened' by the stimulus and gives in to it. Such a turning-toward does not yet have to be a deliberate ('spontaneous') performance; it can happen simply as a habitual response to the affective allure.

The ego has now been 'awakened' and is perceptually turned-toward what was affectively pre-constituted for it. In doing so, the ego is not directed at the continuously changing sound data. Rather, it directs itself *through* them, 'toward the sound as a unity which by its essence presents itself in this change, in this flux of appearances' (Husserl 1997a, 107). The object that now appears to the ego has a different structure than the pre-structured field of continuously changing data. Whereas earlier the sound was merely a part of a poorly delineated field of vague affections, something lived through but not made thematic, the sound now falling within one's attention is a single enduring phenomenon. The ego-subject has 'entered into' the field and stands in proximity to the object which now shows itself. This new constitution of the object of directedness is possible *only* as a correlate of the ego-subject; it is thus entirely unknown to the background field of sense.

With the turning-toward of the ego-subject, a new dimension of activity and

meaning is disclosed. The sound-object now brought into view can elicit further interest; certain moments of it may call out for further explication. Also, a whole horizonal network of anticipations and future possibilities opens up. Is the car that I hear approaching me or not? Should I make way for it in order to let it pass? Should I turn around to see what it looks like? And so on. These networks of horizons and affections are in turn deeply influenced by one's previous experiences. One always apprehends objects in degrees of familiarity which determine passively delineated future expectations – a kind of tacit awareness of the sort of things that might happen next. The very same sound-object is thus passively interpreted differently in various settings according to norms set by previous experiences; for instance whether one is walking alongside the street, crossing it, and so forth. These matters will be dealt with in more detail in *Chapter 7*.

It is crucial to differentiate between the object one apprehends by simply turning-toward and the object or state of affairs that is the correlate of judgmental activity. To see a car and think 'this is a blue Porsche 911' is an activity of a higher level (a founded act of *categorial intuition*) that is properly speaking unknown to the passive perceptual field under discussion.[101] The propositional (for Husserl *ideal*) sense 'this is a blue Porsche 911' has a different temporal structure which Husserl characterizes as 'omni-temporal'; it is no longer tied directly to receptivity (which has its own, limited, temporal dimensions). Because of this, the propositional sense can be repeated freely for years to come, even when the actual blue Porsche has long disappeared.

But such higher level ego-accomplishments are not in place here.[102] Looking at a Porsche is not the same as judging about it. One obvious difference is that the perceptual content involved in simply looking at a blue Porsche 911 is not propositionally articulated. A propositionally articulated content is phenomenologically different from one that is not; it is experienced differently, with different levels of ego-activity and a different presented content. Propositional articulation is a higher level, intellectual act. Only the correlate of

[101] See also *Chapter 3,* where I showed that Husserl already maintained this view in *Logical Investigations*.

[102] One could add here that such higher level judgmental accomplishments are in fact completely bracketed by Husserl at this point of analysis. The kind of perceptual apprehensions under discussion here must be principally independent from the capacity for propositional explication, as they are considered the genetic condition of possibility for that. This implies it should at least be considered possible that a consciousness engages in perceptual acts of simple apprehension while lacking the capacity for judgments in the proper sense.

an intellectual act is 'our possession, which henceforth we have at our disposal, which we can come up with again at any time' (Husserl 1997a, 197). The difference at stake is between a '*production of objects* [and] a *production of the knowledge of […] object[s]*, therefore [in case of the latter] the possession of this object in itself as that which is permanently identifiable anew' (Husserl 1997a, 200).

Put differently, Husserl considers only the object of an intellectual act an articulated, *ideal* content. It transgresses the boundaries of the immediacy of perception and thereby becomes a lasting possession of the ego-subject, one that remains self-identical and is therefore expressible and shareable with others. Such an ideal object has very different noetic and noematic structures (see *Chapter 7*) than the constitution of the perceptual object itself here under discussion.

The object of perceptual apprehension is, by contrast, not propositionally articulated. Yet in spite of this, it has a kind of unity unknown to the background fields of sense. The latter, as described earlier, lack the kind of pre-constituted unity and identity that thing-perception has, because they lack the ego-subject's attention. Fields of sense do not represent things; they are not over-against the subject, but immanent in consciousness. Simple apprehension, however, involves the ego-subject's passive turn toward the source of affection. It is the lowest type of intentional accomplishment, one which posits an object – a unitary, temporally enduring and transcendently existing thing.

Yet unlike with judgment contents, the unity of the object of simple apprehension is not an intellectual unity. It is not a unity which originates from or has its 'seat' in the understanding. On Husserl's account, perceptual unity is rather first brought forth by the structures of passive receptive experience itself. Objecthood itself is first pre-constituted in perception, and all judgments and categories of judgment ultimately refer back to this receptive consciousness (Husserl 1997a, 25-27). As the following section shows in more detail, not only the thing as a unity, but many other categorial structures of thought are considered by Husserl to be pre-constituted in passive perception. Synthetic unity of the manifold of intuition (to adopt the Kantian phrase) is not the result of the intellect; it is a pre-conceptual *sui generis* organization within perceptual-kinetic consciousness, where the structures of thought have their genesis.

To summarize this section: Husserl describes the move from completely passive, pre-intentionally constituted fields of sense toward simple apprehension – as the simplest, non-founded intentional relation to an object – in terms of the ego-subject's arousal or stimulation by the affective tendencies harbored in the field of sense. Affective content, or what some today would call phenomenal

content, is the condition *sine qua non* for higher order consciousness. Furthermore, the *thing*, as a unitary and self-persisting object given in simple seeing, is possible only as a correlate of an ego-subject. The ego-subject must first turn toward the source of affective stimulation, be 'awakened' by it, in order to subsequently *animate* the immanently pre-structured affections and to construe the object. To do so, it does not have to think, nor does it need to synthetically employ (pure) concepts: its mere passive-attentive gaze suffices.

### *6.2.2. Perceptual Explication*

Starting from a simple apprehension, one can move to a new kind of perceptual awareness and corresponding noematic structure. This new activity is called perceptual explication, characterized by Husserl as an activity of 'entering into the internal horizon' of the object (Husserl 1997a, 112), that is, of explicating parts and moments of the perceptual object constituted in simple apprehension. Explication thus involves a new level of perceptual (non-cognitive) interest, one that goes out not just to the perceptual object as a unity, but to one or more of its parts or determinations. Whereas simple apprehension consisted of a plain perception of a thing, say, a coffee mug, one now slides one's eyes to the coffee stains *on* the mug, assuming they somehow affect the ego-subject and draw its perceptual attention. This process can continue: attention might further shift to the darker spots of the stains themselves, and so on, until interest is lost and satisfaction gained.

Perceptual explication can be explained by continuing the example of looking at a coffee mug on the desk. Even though the hyletic contents of this act of perception will change continuously, in directing its attention to the mug the ego-subject apprehends something identical *through* these changing contents. The mug which is thus brought into view is necessarily given imperfectly. Not all its other sides are currently seen, and there are likewise aspects to its front side that the ego-subject has not turned its attentive regard to yet. All these yet unknown qualities of the perceptual object make up its 'inner horizon'.[103] If some aspect of the inner horizon stands out affectively, it may pull on the ego-subject to turn its attention toward it, thus yielding a new center of focus.

Let's assume walking into a room and seeing a coffee mug on the desk which somehow draws perceptual attention. At first sight, this mug is given

[103] The inner horizon contrasts with the outer horizon of the object given in simple apprehension, which concerns its vaguely intended surroundings. I return to this in the next section.

incompletely, in other words, it is given with its inner and outer horizons. We are not yet acquainted with its backside, with the details of its surface, the objects around it, etc. Because of this horizonal emptiness, the ego-subject is always pushed to act further, to *learn* more about its world. We can further imagine that now that the ego-subject has simply apprehended the mug, a darker stain on its exterior given only vaguely may somehow affect it. According to Husserl, in order to explicate the stain, the ego-subject must now turn its attention toward it, yet simultaneously, it must *retaining-in-grasp* the mug itself as the substrate theme (Husserl 1997a, 112-119). The ego-subject is not directed at the stain simply as an object for itself. It is rather interpreted as a 'moment' of the substrate mug, which is retained-in-grasp as the explication endures. Only this way do we see the stain as a determination of the mug.

This retaining-in-grasp, which is necessary for the act of perceptual explication, thus involves a peculiar split of attention. While the ego-subject shifts its attentive gaze toward the coffee stain, it simultaneously holds fast to the mug which was the focal point previously. This retaining-in-grasp of the principal theme does not require any genuine effort on behalf of the ego-subject. Through it, however, an entirely passive synthetic coincidence takes place, namely between the previous intention now only retained-in-grasp and the current intention explicating the coffee stain. The result is perceptual awareness of a stain on the mug – rather than *just* a stain, which would be the case if the previous apprehension were completely abandoned.

Husserl maintains that in perceptual explication, which requires no thinking capacities, the mug and stain are pre-constituted as *substrate* and *predicate*. Similar explications are possible regarding *relations* between different substrates, for instance concerning their respective size, weight, or their causal relationships. This is addressed by Husserl as relational explication. I can, for one, move two stones simultaneously and – without forming an explicit judgment – achieve consciousness of the one being heavier than the other. The synthetic activities characteristic of such a passive consciousness are taken by Husserl to suffice for apprehending things as determinations of other things, as bigger or smaller than other things, as standing in if/then-relationships to other things, and so on. Although these categorial relations do not *explicitly* surface here, as would be the case in categorial intuition, they are pre-figured (pre-constituted) in pre-predicative experience.

To make this clearer: Husserl thinks that in a categorial (non-sensible, 'intellectual') intuition, the subject apprehends the syntactical relations

themselves. It is only through this higher level activity that categories and the states of affairs they bind are constituted. Categorial intuition is a kind of blend of intellectual and sensible capacities. It is a grasping of the structures obtaining between objects and/or predicates. The content of such an act is a propositional content. In perceptual explication, by contrast, we have only a pre-constitution of categorial relations in the perceptual sphere. Perceptual explication only concerns the pre-constitution of predicative relations, an accomplishment belonging to receptivity and which demands no functions of thought. Husserl's position is that categorial relations are in a way employed synthetically in pre-predicative experience before we are even capable of forming judgments. They *pre-figure* in perception. Categorial judgments are subsequently possible only by somehow *drawing out* what is already implicitly contained in perception (I discuss this in *Chapter 7*).

To summarize this section and the previous one: prior to judgment, categorial structures – including unity, identity, and causality – are pre-constituted in a merely perceptual consciousness. The lowest of these perceptual accomplishments is simple apprehension, which occurs when affective tendencies of the associatively pre-structured field pull on the ego-subject and force it to turn its attention toward it. On the basis of that activity another type of accomplishment may be erected, called perceptual explication, which consists of the penetration of the horizon of the simply apprehended object. Here, other categorial structures may be pre-constituted, most notably the Aristotelean predicative structure (subject and predicate) and relational determinations such as causal relationships.

### *6.2.3. On Horizons, Action, the Body, and the Teleology of Perception*

So far I considered three levels of perceptual activity in Husserl's genetic phenomenology: fields of sense, simple apprehension, and perceptual explication. These are the three main levels of perceptual activity Husserl distinguishes prior to the advent of judgment. Whereas the latter two are intentional activities, the former is not. The transition between these two different classes of constitution Husserl clarifies by appeal to affective allures which the field of sense harbors, which subsequently motivate the ego's 'awakening' and turning-toward. Only by thus 'giving in' to the allure can a perceptual object and features of it be constituted.

In my exposition of simple apprehension and explication I focused on the

constitution of the intentional object on the basis of the affective field of sense. Yet this approach, which mirrors Husserl's own in *Experience and Judgment*, necessarily involves an over-simplification of the total perceptual process. The self-givenness of the object or its determinations is not perception's sole accomplishment. In other words, to conceive of perception plainly as the presentation of objects and their features is phenomenologically speaking not feasible. A complete account of perceptual intentionality must take further laws of consciousness into consideration. It must show how the *process* of perception unfolds, and not just offer a static description of various levels of object-constitution. This, too, Husserl analyzed in detail. In the following I highlight a number of important features of Husserl's broader theory of pre-predicative experience: (i) horizonal consciousness, (ii) perception as action, (iii) the role of the body in perception, and (iv) perception as 'teleologically' oriented at 'knowledge' acquisition. This still excludes two other important aspects, namely (v) the role of passively acquired and (vi) of actively acquired habits in perception, which I postpone until the second half of the next chapter.

In the passive synthesis lectures, Husserl famously remarks that perceptual experience involves a *pretension* to accomplish more than it can accomplish (Husserl 2001, 48). With this pretension Husserl partially refers to (i) the horizonal structure of perception. When, for instance, one looks at a table in front of one, there is only one side of that table given at any particular point in time. Invariantly the table is given in so-called 'adumbrations', even though the whole object is intended. Because perception is adumbrated, there is a sense in which the presented content is in continuous change. At least with respect to *how* the table is given, it must be said to be 'a new sense in every phase' (Husserl 2001, 40, 58). But in spite of this, the object the ego-subject is directed at remains (in principle) identical, even as the ongoing series of perspectival intentions proceeds and continues to enrich the perceptual sense.

Husserl also addresses the way in which those sides of the table currently out of view are given to consciousness as 'apperceived' or as made 'co-present'. They belong to the object's 'inner horizon' – those internal features of an intended object that are not currently fulfilled but which have the potentiality of being fulfilled in the future. Besides such inner horizons, a perceptual act is also said to involve 'outer horizons'.[104] One never perceives *just* a table; it stands in a certain

[104] Husserl distinguishes further, among others, between horizons in terms of pre-given familiarity and horizons as possible future givings, (Husserl 2008, 53), or between fore-having (on the basis of the just-past) and anticipation (the soon-to-come) (Husserl 2008, 116-121).

context, for instance a room with some other things. Relative to the perceived table, which is the central theme of the perceptual act, these other objects function as outer horizons. Although the ego-subject is not thematically aware of them, there is implicit awareness of their presence, and likewise of the perceived object's place in the total world-horizon (Husserl 2008, 116-129). It is this empty, unfulfilled and implicit awareness – either of the object's inner or outer determinations – which the term 'horizonal awareness' is generally supposed to capture.

Both inner and outer horizons are thus typically unfulfilled; they are 'empty' or 'emptily intended'. But in spite of being so, they are never entirely empty. As Husserl puts it, the horizonal 'halo of consciousness is a *prefiguring* that *prescribes a rule* for the transition to new actualizing experiences' (Husserl 2001, 42 my italics). Horizons, then, have a kind of *normative function* in prescribing 'rules' to this extent that they lay out the possible paths future perceptions may take. Certainly these are no rules in the demanding sense of the term. Which of all possible future paths will be actualized depends not on rules – it is not a matter of reasoning – but on affection. Affective tendencies continuously emanate out of the emptiness of the horizon and entice the ego-subject to act, to discover further. Horizons, therefore, are not just emptily co-presented things and features, but simultaneously unfulfilled and inviting *possibilities for action*.

This is why, according to Husserl, (ii) the horizon of perceptual experience is never a static emptiness, but always a 'horizon of doing' Husserl 2008, 363). In everyday life, Husserl notes, 'perceiving is a doing' (Husserl 2008, 365). Every 'I am directed at something' is always an 'I am doingly directed' (Husserl 2008, 366). Perception is never mere intentionality taken as the representation of objects; it is always both a doing and a being concerned with (Husserl 2008, 380). To every doing – every intentional act – belongs a horizon of possible doing; a practical, living horizon of possibilities which invites new doings. The subject is engaged in the world, and the object of any perception stands in a practical horizon determined by one's own ongoing preoccupations.

Since the concept of horizonal awareness points to future action, it also points (iii) to the body. As noted earlier, Husserl conceives of perception and bodily movement as intimately connected processes. As Husserl puts it, perceptual experiences go 'hand in hand with the orchestrating movements of the lived-body' (Husserl 2001a, 50). Movement and appearance form a 'constitutive duet' (Husserl 2001a, 52). This so-called lived-body is not the body as *object* of awareness, but the *medium* through which one acts. It is not the body as it shows

up objectively, but the 'organ' through which experience unfolds.[105] This lived body is also the zero-point for all determinations of location and of the movements of surrounding objects (see Husserl 1940, 24; 1973b, 556).

The way perception and bodily movement are entwined can be illustrated nicely by referring to the concept of horizon. First, since new aspects of the world are made available through bodily movement, as it inevitably changes the way things are presented, new perceptual horizons are likewise opened up because of movements. Second, and in a way reversely, horizons appear and affect precisely in order to stimulate new actions, which means the very possibility of movement is in fact implied in horizonal consciousness. Put differently, emptiness would not yield affective allures at all had consciousness lacked the power for action. The entire structure of perception and indeed also of horizons and affections is therefore indebted to the very capacity to move (see also Husserl 1940, 31-37, and *Chapter 7*).

So far, we have seen that perception always involves an emptiness, which functions as an open horizonal network of future possibilities, and that this horizonal awareness is essentially related to one's practical, bodily doings and invites such doings through affections. An intentional experience is thus always a part of an inviting and open-ended system*;* every 'aspect of the [perceived] object in itself points to a *continuity*, to multifarious continua of *possible new perceptions*' (Husserl 2001, 41 my italics). There is always an 'appearance-core upon which appearances have their hold', yet this appearance-core 'is what it is in its mode of appearance [only as] *a system of referential implications*' (Husserl 2001, 41 my italics). Perception is an interplay between intended object and undetermined horizon; a co-operation of affection and action, of perception and movement, of fullness and emptiness.

This brings me to the last point, namely Husserl's somewhat controversial idea that perception is inherently striving toward 'knowledge' acquisition. As we saw already, Husserl thinks the horizons surrounding (or internal to) the simply apprehended thing call out to the ego-subject to act. It invites it to move and to

[105] Unlike the objective body, the lived-body as medium is, Husserl maintains, peculiarly self-aware. To perceive with a body implies a kind of pre-reflective self-awareness. The awareness at stake does not pertain to the ego-subject in the more pregnant sense, but rather concerns the very affecting and being affected itself. As Husserl explains at one point: 'by viewing an object I am conscious of the position of my eyes and at the same time – in the form of a novel systematic empty horizon – I am conscious of the entire system of possible eye positions that rest at my disposal' (Husserl 2001a, 51). See also Zahavi and Parnas (1998) and Zahavi (2008b) for contemporary engagements with the idea of a pre-reflective self-awareness.

see: 'there is still more to see here, turn me so you can see all my sides […], you will get to know me like this, all that I am, all my surface qualities, all my inner sensible qualities, etc.' (Husserl 2001, 41). The ego-subject is constantly attracted by new affections, invited to consider things better, due to the very fact that the object is never given fully, but always in some horizonal emptiness. For Husserl, this means perceptual consciousness is inherently oriented toward the acquisition of 'knowledge' taken in the broadest sense of the term. More accurately put, perception is an ever-ongoing process that drives toward fullness. This does not mean one always wants to know the object in all possible ways. The teleological orientation at stake rather has a pre-epistemological (practical) signification for Husserl. It refers to the constant interplay between perception, emptiness, affection, action, and fullness – a process inherently driven toward the relief or satisfaction which occurs when a sufficient degree of fullness has been achieved, after which the whole process starts anew again.

All aspects of perception therefore contribute to the goal of 'knowledge' acquisition or fullness. The stimulating affections which emanate from the empty horizon are also teleological, as they entice new actions, new explications, and therewith new 'knowledge' possessions. Bodily movements are called forth by the affecting horizons in order to attain fulfillment. The whole kinesthetic process (of perception and movement) therefore aims toward the fullness of the object. Referring to teleology and knowledge acquisition here serves only to clarify the phenomenological structure of the perceptual process, not to suggest that we are thoroughly rational beings constantly seeking knowledge.

To conclude this section: although Husserl's genetic work in part seeks to develop a systematic and hierarchically structured outline of the various levels of accomplishments of perception, Husserl also greatly appreciated the complexity of the perceptual process as a whole. Particularly important here are the (i) horizonal structure of perception, (ii) its character as action, (iii) the role of the body in perception, and (iv) its inherent teleological orientation toward 'knowledge' acquisition or fullness.

### *6.2.4. Concluding Remarks*

This chapter explored important aspects of Husserl's later views on perceptual consciousness. I offered a reading that distinguishes between three main layers of perceptual activity: *fields of sense, simple apprehension,* and *perceptual explication*. Each of these has its distinctive structure, which involves a specific role for the ego (or

lack thereof) as well as a unique kind of content. In the last part, I related these discussions to the role of horizonal awareness and the body in concrete perception.

Today, questions regarding the contents of perception often rely on the implicit assumption that there is one basic kind of perceptual relation. It is then asked whether or not perception has propositional content, conceptual content, and so on. One lesson to be drawn from Husserl's later work is that such questions might be ill-founded. They assume a single, general, phenomenologically unclarified conception of what it means to perceive. By doing so, they ignore not only the various strata of accomplishment we colloquially refer to as perception, but also perception's deep entwinement with bodily movement, action, and the role of emptiness and affection in this perceptual-kinetic process.

In my exposition of Husserl's later account, I first argued that hyletic data are always already pre-structured into fields of sense. Since these contents are not intentionally structured – they contain no ego-acts, presented contents, or references to objects – they are also non-conceptual. Instead of referring to intentionality as their distinctive mark, Husserl addresses them in terms of two very different phenomenological structures: immanent association and affection. Insofar as, on Husserl founded-founding account of consciousness, these affective contents pervade all higher-level intentional experiences, all experience must be said to have weakly non-conceptual content.

I further showed that although fields of sense are different from acts of perception with regard to their non-intentional structure, consciousness is not radically divided between them. Fields of sense prepare for intentional acts of perception by offering a pre-structured background which allows for the ego-subject's attention to be awakened and subsequently drawn to act upon it. Such acts of perception, insofar as they do not blend with intellectual acts, can be divided into two fundamental kinds: simple apprehension and perceptual explication. Here, a direct intentional relation to an object first comes about, which, although not necessarily formed by the understanding, can be taken up into genuine predicative relations. This indicates that on Husserl's genetic account the contents of simple perception are at least weakly conceptual, which in turn matches well the earlier account of the expressibility of the noema discussed in *Chapter 4*.

In order to give the full story of the genesis of reason out of pre-predicative experience, the transition from perception to thought must still be addressed.

Moreover, the crucial role of habits – both intellectual and pre-intellectual – in perceptual experience stands in need of clarification. That is to say, the structure of perception demands considering the fundamental ways in which consciousness's past has always already influenced its present activities. This is where the clearest answer to the question of full conceptualism can be found, as the next chapter will show.

# Chapter 7. Genesis of Reason: Active Synthesis

*Chapter Summary*
This chapter continues to explore Husserl's genetic-phenomenological theory of perception. I here turn to 'active synthesis', which is where those acts and contents that involve conceptual capacities are at home. I mainly discuss three themes the previous chapter left unaddressed. The first is (i) the transition from perception to judgment. Here I argue that according to Husserl perception and judgment have categorically distinct contents, even though the latter have their genesis in perception. Second, I assess (ii) Husserl's account of the contents of judgment, and show that he again operates with several separate notions rather than one. Third, in the second part, I discuss his views on (iii) the impact of pre-predicative and conceptual habits on perceptual experience. Here I focus specifically on perceptual-kinetic habits, typical familiarity, and on the cultural shaping of experience. This phenomenology of habit reveals, I argue, Husserl's increasingly holistic understanding of the perception-judgment relation. For the later Husserl, relations of foundation do not run merely in one direction. Instead, no aspect of consciousness can be understood without drawing on the whole of it, including traces of its very own past.

## 7.1. Perceiving and Judging

### *7.1.1. Introduction and Overview of the Chapter*

In the previous chapter, I focused on three strata of perceptual accomplishment: fields of sense, simple apprehension, and perceptual explication.[106] Whereas the first consist merely of pre-intentionally constituted affective fields that lack noematic senses or references to objects, the latter two involve an awakened ego-subject passively 'letting in' the appearing object. Differently put, the first concerns the pre-structuring of sensation contents in background awareness; the latter two are cases of simple perception prior to any theoretical efforts on behalf of the ego-subject.

We further saw that pre-structured affective fields are considered by Husserl to be the genetic condition of possibility for acts of attentive perception. This means that they are the necessary pre-figurings of data on the basis of which intentional acts – and with them subjectivity and worldhood properly – may come about. In my discussion of these affective fields, I claimed that their

[106] Earlier versions of parts of the discussion on types in this chapter were published in a special issue of *MetaJournal* in an article going by the title 'Kant and Husserl on bringing perception to judgment', see Van Mazijk (2016a).

contents are not intentionally produced but instead the result of so-called immanent association. For that reason, they are also not weakly conceptual (possible substrates of judgment). In discussing the contents of acts of simple perception, I showed that Husserl considers the pre-constitution of categorial relations a *sui generis* accomplishment of pre-predicative consciousness, rather than a result of functions of understanding. In other words, perceptual-kinetic interaction with the world autonomously brings forth contents of a kind fit to figure in reasoning.[107]

In this final chapter, I turn to Husserl's later work on intellectual acts (active synthesis), which yield constitutions Husserl keeps categorically distinct from the perceptual contents discussed so far. Although the simple apprehension of a perceptual thing as examined in *Chapter 6* involved an attentive ego-subject, it was not spontaneously creative there.[108] Simple apprehension lets a thing appear in a single blow; the ego-subject only has to 'turn-toward' it in order to let it appear. As shown previously, this level of constitution can suffice to grasp things *with* categorial structures. But in spite of such complex categorial pre-figurings, passive perception lacks a '*will to cognition*' (Husserl 1997a, 198); a striving for a lasting knowledge of the object. Only through this new level of attention can the ego-subject enter (what Husserl considers to be) a new realm of being, namely that of *ideal objectivities*.[109]

In this chapter, I pursue two aspects of Husserl's genetic work that I have not dealt with so far. First, (i) I continue the genetic reading started in *Chapter 6* by turning to the phenomenology of judgment acts, which are again ordered in terms of complexity. I start by discussing the transition from perceiving to thinking. Generally conceived, this concerns one of the hallmark problems of phenomenology, namely the very achievement of objectivity out of passive consciousness. My reading of this transition puts much weight on the so-called 'extraction of the state of affairs',[110] by which Husserl has in mind something quite similar to what is nowadays called 'demonstrative reference' (see also *Chapter 2* and *3*). To 'extract' a state of affairs means to give propositional

[107] Both points are also defended in Van Mazijk (2016b). See also Siewert (2013) for a position close to mine on this point but developed on the basis of the writings of Merleau-Ponty.

[108] Husserl also occasionally uses the Kantian term 'spontaneity' in a wider sense, as to include the freedom of bodily movements, see for instance: (Husserl 2000, 63).

[109] I also refer more colloquially to ideal contents as the contents of thought or as conceptual contents in the strict sense. Their corresponding acts are acts of judgment, intellectual acts, meaning (*Bedeutung*) acts, or acts which propositionally articulate.

[110] The English translation of *Erfahrung und Urteil* speaks of 'eduction' instead.

expression to something directly given in perception (e.g. '*this* book here'). Extraction is an act of judgment – with a corresponding ideal content lying 'beyond' the mere perceptual act – but one nonetheless tied to the immediate perceptual presence of the object. It is the simplest act of judgment, which first lets the situation pre-constituted in perceptual synthesis transcend its 'finite' temporal horizon and be grasped as an ideal state of affairs, repeatable and shareable even after the perceptual phase has past.

Whereas the extracted states of affairs can still be read as a type of hybrid perceptual-intellectual act, the majority of Husserl's analyses on active synthesis pertain to contents that come about 'off line', i.e. in conceptual thought. Unlike many contemporary philosophers interested in perceptual content, Husserl in fact has well-delineated phenomenological accounts of different types of judgment and their respective ideal contents. For the sake of completing the pyramid of hierarchically structured achievements set out in *Chapter 6*, I also discuss the various levels of conceptual activity Husserl distinguishes briefly in the first part of this chapter.

This should then complete the narrative started in the previous chapter. In the second part, (ii) I turn to what I earlier called the diachronic side of Husserl's genetic phenomenology by discussing the role of habit in perception. Although denying that perception can autonomously bring forth propositionally articulated contents, the later Husserl is well aware that passive perception is *always already* shaped by both judgmental as well as passive acts of the past. According to Husserl, '*each act* institutes a lasting (habitual) validity which reaches beyond the fleetingness of the act, a continuing *opinion* taken in its broadest meaning' (Husserl 2008, 47 my italics). Put differently, every act leaves a kind of imprint on consciousness, thereby contributing to the development of habits in the broadest sense of that term.

My discussions in the second part separate two broad classes of habit: (a) passively (pre-predicatively) and (b) actively (conceptual) originating habit. I first discuss ($a^1$) originally passive, perceptual-kinetic habits that contribute to the low level constitution of three-dimensional space. Second, I turn to ($a^2$) so-called 'types', a notion introduced by Husserl to describe the sense of familiarity objects of simple perception are always already endowed with, which I ascribe to the workings of passive habit. Lastly, (b) I remark on Husserl's views on the role of actively (conceptually) originating habit in perception.

The work on habit makes, I think, an essential though still frequently neglected contribution to Husserl's transcendental-phenomenological

epistemology. Much of the discussions in previous chapters served to show that Husserl's philosophy provides an alternative approach – a purely phenomenological one – to problems of belief warrant, perceptual content, and the perception-judgment relation. In *Chapter 3* on *Logical Investigations,* we saw Husserl break with core presuppositions of Kantian epistemology by re-conceptualizing epistemic justification in terms of the synthesis of full and empty acts. *Chapter 4* subsequently explored the role of non-conceptual and weakly conceptual content in the static phenomenology of *Ideas I.* Finally, after the considerations of *Chapter 5* which revealed the pure description of the unitary life of consciousness as the true scope of philosophy, Husserl's bottom-up investigations of Chapter *6* showed how passive synthesis makes the activity of judgment possible – a 'genesis' of reason in perception that stands in sharp contrast with the top-down conceptualist approach of both Kant and McDowell.

By now turning to the work on habit in the final chapter, we arrive at yet a finer elucidation of the complex phenomenology of perceptual experience, one which yields a decisively more holistic picture of the perception-judgment relation. By analyzing how consciousness develops through habits, Husserl discovers the *mutually* founding relations between perception and judgment. While genetically speaking, perceptual-kinetic syntheses make rationality possible, Husserl also shows a deep appreciation for the way perception is *always already* habitually structured. Both passively and actively originating habits are indispensable for a clarification of the contents of perceptual experience. Founding relations between perception and thought therefore run in both directions. This indicates, moreover, that the later Husserl increasingly favored a holistic understanding of world-experience, where no act can be thoroughly understood without drawing on the whole of conscious life, including its very own past.

### *7.1.2. From Perception to Judgment*

The importance of the notion of 'pre-constitution' in Husserl's genetic phenomenology can hardly be over-estimated. As I showed in *Chapter 6*, Husserl's later ideas regarding how judgment about the perceptual world is possible are profoundly shaped by the insight that passive perceptual experience already prepares the world for being open to judgment. The world of passive perception harbors the kind of structures governing judgment (if/then, subject/predicate, part/whole etc.) in a pre-constituted fashion. However,

perceptual explication and relational contemplation, as Husserl calls them, lack the will to determine the object; to make it one's possession for once and for all, freely retrievable at any time.

The question to consider in this section is the following: how does Husserl describe the transition from passive perception, where various situations can be pre-constituted, to a judgment about a state of affairs? Put differently, how do we produce an objective, articulated state of affairs on the basis of a perceptual awareness which involves no functions of understanding proper? What are the important noetic changes (concerning the performance of the act, the ego's will, its attention, etc.) and noematic changes (concerning the intentional content of the act) here?

To explain this, it is best to start with an example of a perception of a certain situation and to then see what its conceptualization looks like. For this we start by simply staring at an object (simple apprehension), subsequently looking at a part or moment of it (perceptual explication), and then forming a judgment about this (categorial intuition through extraction). The first two steps, also dealt with in *Chapter 6,* go roughly as follows.

Say that there is a coffee mug on the desk and that one discovers it by simply looking at it. Let's further assume that, given that there is a factor of surprise involved in the initial apprehension, the perceptual representation of the mug invokes some further perceptual interest. At the first glance of it, the mug of course gave itself incompletely. It has its inner horizons, which are those parts of it that are only indeterminately apprehended (e.g. its backside). Given that consciousness is intrigued to a certain degree, a network of affective allures now comes into play that calls out for giving the mug a better look. The allures affect the ego-subject and convince it to shift its attention to an outstanding feature, for instance, its bright white color. After a short inspection the ego-subject may become saturated with the 'knowledge' gained and move on.

In this brief perceptual episode we moved from a simple apprehension to a perceptual explication, both of which are passive, pre-judgmental acts. During the explication, the former simple apprehension of the mug-object was 'retained-in-grasp' by the receptive ego while it shifted its attention to some feature of the internal horizon, namely its color. This shift of attention to an internal feature of the noema constitutes the 'perceptual explication' also discussed in *Chapter 6*. Explication thus involves a fusion of two intentions: one directed at the substrate (retained-in-grasp) and one to a feature of the substrate. The result is the perceptual apprehension 'mug is white', involving the mug's pre-constitution as

substrate and the whiteness as predicate, all in a non-cognitive receptive consciousness.

The perceptual situation, according to Husserl, is pre-predicatively structured. There is, however, no predication as of yet. The categorial relations do not surface explicitly in perception. One does not see the mug's *being* white. In spite of the rich achievements ascribed by Husserl to perceptual experience, the latter cannot autonomously bring about objectivities properly. Objectivities of the understanding 'can never be originally apprehended in a mere act of reception' (Husserl 1997a, 251).

To be sure, perception proper always involves a noematic sense which lies beyond what is 'really' given at any moment of perception. The hyletic contents vary incessantly, yet one sees one and the same coffee mug, which, as a perceptual sense, continuously gains finer determinations as the perceptual process proceeds. But in spite of all this, Husserl maintains that there is no conceptual or *ideal* unity involved in simple seeing. Only an ideal object is, *qua* object for the ego, or *qua* intended sense, infinitely beyond the subjective experience in which it is constituted. The ideal state of affairs 'this white mug here' can be repeated infinitely by me or anyone else in future times, regardless of whether the situation still obtains, which is why Husserl calls ideal contents 'omni-temporal' (Husserl 1997a, 199).

The question to consider is how we get from one to the other, that is, how we can grasp the ideal content – the only sort of content that can figure in judgment – on the basis of the sensibly intuited situation. The difference in case here is between *passively explicating* 'S is *p*' ('mug is white') and *propositionally explicating* 'that S is *p*'. It is precisely the transition from the first to the second that Husserl ponders over at one particular point in *Experience and Judgment*: 'what is the new achievement which occurs when, on the basis of explication, we come to the predicative determination 'S is *p*'?' (Husserl 1997a, 206). This particular type of act, by which we form a predicative judgment directly onto a perceptual explication, is referred to by Husserl as the 'extraction' of the state of affairs from the perception.

According to Husserl, like all judgment, the extraction of the state of affairs demands a specific 'will to knowledge'; a new kind of 'voluntary participation' that is unknown to passive perceptual experience. Judging is a desire to 'fix […] the result of contemplative perception', in such a way as to fixate it 'for once and for all' (Husserl 1997a, 198). This desire for knowledge demands that the ego-subject is not merely present, but also active as a performer and 'producer'

(Husserl 1997a, 198, 201). Attaining an ideal object is always a performance of the ego-subject living in the experience – there can be no judgment without a judger.

Husserl's way of portraying how extraction takes place is striking. According to Husserl, if the ego-subject intends to *know that* 'S is *p*' on the basis of the perceptual situation 'S is *p*', it must actively and voluntarily *turn back* toward the synthesis 'S is *p*' as passively carried out (Husserl 1997a, 208). The ego, he notes, must *repeat* the passive synthetic process, but this time in a changed, willful attitude. Because the relevant categorial connection was *already* a part of the passively accomplished perceptual situation, Husserl can refer to the new, willfully repeated accomplishment as a 'turning-back'. The extraction of the state of affairs is therefore a kind of doing over; an *actively turning back* to a synthetic achievement *already* accomplished by a passive consciousness.[111]

It is interesting to note that although the new conceptual objectivity is radically different from anything constituted in receptivity (the ideal object belongs to a different ontological realm), it must be said to have figured in some way in the passive perception already. After all, it is only through an active *repetition* that the judgment could take place – which means that the theme of the act of judgment had to be present prior to the judging. Husserl's position seems, therefore, almost paradoxical: in extraction, the content that figures in judgment can be exactly the same content we intended before – we only actively repeat its passive constitution – yet the former lies infinitely beyond the latter.

### *7.1.3. Different Types of Conceptual Content*

We just examined the phenomenological differences between a perceptual explication of a situation and an intellectual apprehension thereof through extraction. Noetically, this difference can be described in terms of the desire to know and permanently possess the object. Noematically, the difference is between two entirely different intentional targets: one a pre-predicatively structured situation fitted within the finite horizon of the temporally extended perceptual act, the other an ideal object lying infinitely beyond consciousness's own doings.

As we have seen, at least in the case of extraction, the contents of thought and perception appear in a way identical, insofar as the judgment act consists in a

[111] See also Smith (1989), whose reading, when held next to mine, could suggest a deep continuity between the early and later Husserl on this topic.

repetition of what is passively pre-constituted in perceptual intentionality. Therefore, McDowell's idea that '*that things are thus and so* is the content of an experience, and it can also be the content of a judgment' (McDowell 1996, 26) seems to find some phenomenological support in Husserl's later writings. Yet at the same time, Husserl nuances this idea considerably by maintaining the distinctness of ideality from anything constituted in perception.[112] Already in *Logical Investigations,* Husserl maintained that an act of thinking can be directly founded upon an act of perceiving, but that the thought content is not for that reason contained in the perception. As Husserl puts it in later work, there is principally 'nothing analogous [to judgmental sense] at the lower level[s]' (Husserl 1997a, 239).

This distinction between thought and perception becomes all the more clear once we move from demonstrative reference to 'off line' modes of thought. Evidently, the full complexity of any perceptual act – its bodily motivations, horizons, affective content, and so on – cannot be transferred into the conceptual, communicable content of a judgment. What I communicate when I tell someone on the phone that the coffee mug here is white is quite far from the same as what I experience when I see that the mug is white. The horizons, affections, motivations, fineness of grain, etc. of perceptual intentionality are not just by-products of perceptual representation: they belong in their way to the meaning or sense perception makes available. The ideal, communicable content, by contrast, by its essence remains self-identical. Differently put, the ideal object can be regarded a kind of end-product of a complicated constitutive nexus which by its essence is excluded from that end-product. Only by detaching the ideal content from the perceptual nexus does it become a communicable, 'omni-temporal' content.

Besides the extracted state of affairs, Husserl distinguishes a number of other contents of thought that are worth examining briefly. These can be ordered hierarchically according to the extent to which they are detached from the perceptually constituted world. The extracted state of affairs, in this respect, constitutes the lowest level of judgment. Genuine thought, however, on Husserl's view, advances only with the separation of ideal contents from their perceptual background. Once the ties between thought and world have been severed, a need arises for warranting the truth of the contents of thought, that is to say, for guaranteeing that thought contents correspond appropriately to the perceptually

[112] This latter point is, of course, crucial to Husserl, who from very early on defended the independence of logical ideality against forms of skepticism.

given world. Language, knowledge, and truth all begin with the disconnecting of ideal contents from the perceptually constituted world.

An important distinction Husserl introduces here is between *bound* and *free* ideal contents. According to Husserl, all bound ideality maintains some kind of connection to the world of perceptual experience. To say that 'this is a white coffee mug' is to express a proposition that is bound in its very sense to the perceptual world, regardless of the fact that it can be expressed and remain valid for any period of time. The same goes for certain grasping of universals (a 'one in the many'). To grasp a universal, the ego-subject must actively shift interest from the concrete intended object to the '*one*' that can be apprehended *through* the perceived object (Husserl 1997a, 321-327, Husserl 2002a, 221). The universal is given just once, and the actual object perceived is now understood as a particularization of it. One might, furthermore, notice a white coffee mug in a cafeteria full of white coffee mugs, thus leading one to think that 'any coffee mug in this cafeteria is white'. Although this is a judgment of universality, it has only regional validity; it is valid within the cafeteria, and for that reason also bound to the perceptual level of constitution (of the perceptually given cafeteria).

This is what differentiates bound ideality from free or *a priori* generality, which 'does not depend on the contingency of the element actually given as the point of departure' (Husserl 1997a, 340, Husserl 2002a, 209-215). To attain an essence *a priori*, we have to disconnect our thoughts from actuality and imaginatively run through an 'arbitrary'[113] set of pure possibilities or possible worlds. For instance, we start with an imagined rose (a pure possibility) and arbitrarily vary its features in order to grasp what is absolutely essential to a rose in general. Like Kant, Husserl maintains that the pure universal thus intuited is not dependent on any actual existing things but rather 'prescribe laws *a priori* to appearances' (CPR B163).[114] Unlike as with Kant, however, Husserl's concept of *a priori* covers an

[113] Although Husserl usually characterizes the process as wholly arbitrary, it naturally does require a model 'which gives direction' (Husserl 1997a, 343) and without which the activity of free imaginative variation could yield no result at all.

[114] It is worth underscoring that *a priori* essences are also not completely isolated from spheres of passive perceptual experience. The experienced world, as Husserl puts it, is *always* the 'universal permanent ground'. Obviously, if one varies roses imaginatively in order to attain the *a priori* essence 'rose in general', the particulars one varies must ultimately derive from all sorts of experiences of roses one has had before. As Husserl notes, 'every fact and every *eidos* remains related to the factual world' (Husserl 1997a, 351). Pure judgment is only a special modification of judgment whereby 'we become conscious of this bond, *putting it consciously out of play*' (Husserl 1997a, 351). This seems to imply that even our understanding of *a priori* essences may change over

endless domain of possible objects. There is an *a priori* essence of 'rose' just as much as there is one of 'sound', 'the color red', or '12'. We can grasp the 'same' thing in different ways: for instance as an individual, as an instance of a universal, or *a priori,* in complete independence of actuality. These are all *modifications* of ideality. Whereas perceptual and ideal contents are radically heterogeneous, the various types of thought content differ only gradually.

As with the layered account of perception in *Chapter 6*, Husserl has good motives for discriminating between various kinds of judgment contents. Phenomenologically speaking, there are important differences between judging about one particular rose and a rose in general. It would of course be a mistake to suppose that, in order to acknowledge those differences, one would have to subscribe to a mystical Platonism about transcendent universals. Husserl's analyses should always be read as descriptions of experiential acts and contents, not as theoretical positings of metaphysical realms of being.

## 7.2. Habits, Norms, and Concepts in Perception

### *7.2.1. Introduction: On How the Past Influences the Present*

In the previous part I completed the genetically layered approach to transcendental consciousness started out in *Chapter 6*, culminating in acts of judgments with *a priori* generality. These contents are no longer part of the domain of perceptual experience. They come about 'off line', and cannot be apprehended through mere acts of receptivity. At the same time, Husserl maintains that ideal contents should, in a way at least, be considered as objects. They are not mere figments of imagination; we can grasp them intellectually, correctly, falsely, clearly, or vaguely, just as we grasp perceptual objects. These crucial matters are all consistently maintained by Husserl from *Logical Investigations* onward, although they undergo major refinements particularly in the genetic phase.

On the standard genetic reading followed so far, the contents of perception and judgment are distinct. Yet Husserl acknowledges that capacities of thought do work their way back into perceptual experience. The firm distinction between conceptual and perceptual contents therefore does not suggest that both are entirely isolated domains. Diachronically considered (see *Chapter 6*), perception

time, as they are the product of the particulars we can imaginatively vary.

and judgment are not separate realms. According to Husserl, all conceptual activity leaves its trace in experience through so-called 'sedimentation', thereby working its way back into passive intentionality and pure passivity. Husserl addresses these processes of 'learning' as forms of 'habit' in the broadest sense of those terms.

Husserl's notion of habit is, unfortunately, not particularly well developed.[115] The meaning of the term may vary among different texts. Husserl speaks of habit in referring to subjects (personhood)[116] as well as to objects, to purely individual as well as to socio-cultural dimensions. Generally speaking, the term does not have an empirical but a transcendental significance for Husserl. That is to say, Husserl's interest in habit stems from its importance for transcendental-phenomenological problems of constitution.

At first sight, the very idea of a transcendental notion of habit may seem somewhat odd. How could the habits one develops through experience have anything to contribute to a final clarification of reality and our knowledge of it? Part of the answer to this lies in Husserl's concept of transcendental consciousness. As I showed in *Chapter 5*, Husserl believes the totality of reality can be approached in two radically different ways. First, it can be assessed simply as a world that really exists regardless of consciousness's constitutive activity. Husserl calls this way of considering things the 'natural attitude', because it is our default way of being in the world. But we can also approach the very same totality of being from the transcendental-phenomenological perspective, namely as sense-constitution. Although we now continue to take things as being real, we consider them entirely as accomplishments of ongoing experience. This way, the total stream of experience, including the world appearing in it, becomes a subject matter of its own.

If we adopt the transcendental-phenomenological stance and reflect carefully, we notice that the things appearing to consciousness bear the marks of previous experience. One cannot, for instance, explain how one can see another person as

[115] See also Moran (2011, 2012, 2014) and Lohmar (1998, 2003, 2008, 2014) for their well-established introductions to Husserl's phenomenology of habit.

[116] Husserl notes in *Ideas II* that any conscious position-taking on behalf of the subject may leave an imprint on the ego itself (Husserl 2000, 118-127, see also Moran 2011, 60-61). Once acquired, an opinion, for one, may become a part of one's sense of self-identity. The opinion no longer needs to be actively taken up by the ego-subject, but becomes a habitual part of the self. Every person is a 'subject of habits' (Husserl 1977, 286). As Jacobs (2010) puts it, 'position-takings endure as features of the ego or self that is the agent responsible for all its position-takings' (Jacobs 2010, 346).

another person (let alone the specific person s/he is) without referring to one's experiential past. In fact, one cannot even explain the very spatio-temporal order of the world without reference to experiential history. The accomplishment of the world is thoroughly subjective-historical. It refers in its very sense to transcendental operations of habit, where habit is understood very generally as processes of learning; of traces or sediments experiences leave onto consciousness. Habit, then, is not like *Bildung* a force of nature out of which human reason grows. It is 'internal' to transcendental consciousness; a force constitutive of the very process of genesis out of which the capacity for thought and the natural world as such come to be.

Clearly, certain dimensions of experience are indebted to quite personal processes of development. Not everyone can read and understand music scores, and even fewer people develop absolute pitch. However, much of what is fundamental to the way the world appears to us is quite universally shared. Each of us experiences a three-dimensional world, and each of us experiences the movement of things therein. Also, the things we see are always already familiar to us in certain general ways. We do not have to think to see a person as another person, or a table as a table. It are primarily the universally shared structures of habit Husserl is interested in, insofar as they contribute to the reality-sense of ordinary experience in which all scientific activity is rooted.

In what follows, I purport to discuss two broad kinds of habit: (i) those which originate from predicative (conceptual or active) synthesis, and (ii) those which originate within passive, pre-conceptual experience itself. The former are habits that result from cultural upbringing, language use, and other broadly rational or socio-cultural activities. The second notion of habit, which I refer to as 'passive habit', concerns the ways in which passive, pre-rational experiences leave imprints upon consciousness that help structure future experiences.

I first discuss passive habits, which I approach from two different angles. First, I discuss how at the lowest level of constitution, perceptual-kinetic habits contribute to the constitution of three-dimensional space, movement, and mere thinghood. Second, I deal with the so-called *type* or *typified perception*. Types concern the familiarity with which objects of simple perception are always already endowed, which (at least on the reading I will be defending) is due to a form of passively originating habit. After these analyses on passive habit, I offer some final reflections on the role of conceptual capacities and the role of culture and intersubjective practice in perception. Together, these analyses place the operations of habit at the very genesis of the perceptual world as such, while

yielding a compelling holistic picture of the various forces operative in perceptual awareness.

### *7.2.2. Habits in the Constitution of Space*

As Crowell (2013) puts it in his insightful reading of normativity in Husserl's phenomenology, the lasting unity or identity in a manifold of perspectival intentions already presupposes 'something like an ordering principle, a norm, that establishes that later temporal moments are 'of the same thing' rather than of some newly appearing thing' (Crowell 2013, 129). On Crowell's reading, any presented content necessarily presupposes certain basic 'normative' dimensions. Perceptually discerning one object from another requires a prior 'knowledge' of where one thing begins and another ends, and thus presupposes a network of norms for perceptual synthesis.

Although it is not obvious that a norm in the strict sense of the term must be implied for such syntheses to take place, it makes sense to think of the capacity to perceptually experience three-dimensional things in space as originating from passive habit. Perception, as I showed previously, can only give the object as a whole because of an implicit horizonal awareness of the perceived object's unseen sides. This horizonal structure of the object, as described in *Chapter 6*, contains tacit references to one's own capacity for movement. The emptiness in the inner horizon of the object presents motivations for future actions. It is because of the capacity for such future actions that the appearance can reach out beyond itself in order to give a full-blown object. Clearly, however, one does not need *actual* movement to see a three-dimensional object. Things are given in a single blow even if one stands still. Somehow, then, perception has always already accomplished the object as a whole. How is that possible?

The answer is that the correlations that obtain between bodily movements and presented contents have been habitualized by consciousness. In the sensory-kinetic system, 'the course of the kinesthetic 'I move' is motivating for the corresponding course of the appearances; […] through the functioning kinesthetics, the corresponding range of changes in the appearances are co-motivated in the habitual familiarity of every free change of the 'I move'' (Husserl 1940, 30). In other words, the movements of the body, according to Husserl, yield certain perceptual-noematic changes, and consciousness is habitually familiar with that very process. Because of this familiarity, consciousness has a prior understanding of the sorts of perceptual changes that will occur upon

movement. As Husserl writes elsewhere, simply 'by viewing an object I am conscious of the position of my eyes and at the same time – in the form of a novel systematic empty horizon – I am conscious of the entire system of possible eye positions that rest at my disposal' (Husserl 2001, 51). What Husserl says here is that consciousness has rich horizonal awareness of the possible future courses of perception – of the ways one can move and things correspondingly will unfold – because one is deeply familiar with one's own perceptual-kinetic system. The correlations of moving and perceiving are known in advance of the actualization of the perceptual act due to habit.

The tacit horizonal structures, we saw earlier, are part of the essence of the perceptual object itself. The perceived object exists as a three-dimensional object only in virtue of its inner horizonal structure, since there is never more than one side or dimension of the object 'really' given at any point in time. We can therefore say that the object itself, in its very three-dimensional thingness, possesses the trace of previous movements. The inner horizon of an object, that which makes the appearance a *thing*, is genetically considered a *pattern of expectations* based on habitualized correlations between one's self-movement and changes in presented content. The thing itself is possible in virtue of the habitual structures inherent in sensory-kinetic consciousness.

If with Crowell and many others (e.g. Doyon 2015, Jansen 2015) we choose to speak of the *normativity* of perception in these contexts, it must follow that normativity and habituality are closely related concepts. Experiencing unfolds through norms, that is: sense-making happens along the lines of what is expected to unfold when new movements yield new perceptions, an expectance which is based on the habitualization of the correlations that obtained in previous experiences.

To sum up this section: the pre-constitution of spatiotemporal things relies strongly on passive habits which concern the correlations between self-movement and perceptual change. The perceptual world quite literally gains its depth from one's own movement, the changes in content that correspond with such movement, and more specifically the ways in which the correlations between both are habitualized.

### *7.2.3. Norms and a Sense of the Real*

So far, I discussed the role of habit at the lowest genetic level responsible for the constitution of space. The sorts of accomplishments at stake here can be

considered pre-intentional; they do not presuppose an ego-subject but are completely passive instead. Insofar as we admit of referring to such processes of perceptual-kinetic habit development as norm-involving, it seems legitimate to speak of thing-perception as inherently normative from the bottom up.

According to Husserl, normative dimensions set by habit play a further role in the pre-constitution of what we may call a sense of the real. In *Ideas II* (Husserl 2000, 60-95), Husserl addresses the importance of principles of 'normality' with regard to the sense of objectivity involved in seeing objects and their properties. Before turning to the ambiguous concept of type in the next section, I shall briefly examine Husserl's thoughts on normality here.

The experience of color can feature as an example. According to Husserl, color properties of experienced objects are dependent on what we consider 'normal' light conditions. In the present context, light conditions are not a matter of natural facts but an accomplishment of experience. Husserl submits that in our pre-scientific dealings with objects, our experience of colors takes place relative to our sense of actual and possible light conditions. For one, in complete darkness, the white color of my coffee mug is no longer perceptually presented to me. In entering my office early in the morning or at night, I am somehow aware of this; I know that the coffee mug which I can vaguely distinguish on the desk is not 'actually' black. The 'actual' color of the mug (white) is thus, according to Husserl, a relative determination that is set against 'normal' light conditions, a norm of which I am tacitly aware. This is why, when I switch on the light, I take myself to perceive the mug as it 'really' is.[117]

The color white, then, is pre-determined in first-personal experience relative to one's implicit grasp of the color's appearance under normal conditions. The 'objective' color of the coffee mug – what one takes to be its 'real' color – is dependent upon certain accepted principles of normality. These, in turn, must be considered the result of habit development. Such norms not only concern the world (e.g. light conditions) but also oneself. The reality of the coffee mug also relies on what one takes to be the normal functioning of one's own lived body. As Husserl illustrates, upon taking a drug called santonin (now fallen out of use), one's color perception of objects may change. Yet in spite of this, one's *sense* of perceiving a white coffee mug may remain unaltered. Although one's perception now represents, for instance, a yellow mug, one still consciously intends a mug that one knows to be white, given the conviction that under normal

[117] McDowell in fact makes a similar point, see especially MacDonald and MacDonald (2006, xiii).

circumstances the mug would again show its 'true' colors (Husserl 2000, 60-95).

Ultimately, these norms set by habitualization govern the regularity of all aspects of the world's intuitive appearance. Husserl even speaks of the world's universal causal style; its typical 'behavior' of showing regularity in the order of unfolding events (Husserl 1976, 28-31). Such behavior too is an accrual of sense that has its source in one's experience and its habitual processes. As Husserl puts it, 'the things of the [everyday] perceived environment […] have, one could say, the habitual character to appear under typical circumstances in corresponding typical ways. […] [T]he perceived world […] also has as a whole its habitual character, namely the character to continue in the usual way it has so far' (Husserl 1976, 31). Needless to say, this typical behavior is not yet of a strictly causal or mechanical form. Phenomenologically speaking, ideal causal laws find their origin in consciousness's tacit horizonal structures which enables pre-cognitive awareness of the world's regular unfolding. In a passive consciousness, the world's causal style is no idealized law, but a typical regularity based on the workings of habit.

### *7.2.4. Types in Perception*

Although consciousness ever streams onwards into new lived experiences, past experiences do not just disappear from consciousness. Apart from being held in retention or being actively remembered, a previous experience can have an immediate effect on new experiences that are similar to it. According to Husserl, newly discovered objects may leave a trace such that future appearances of like objects will immediately appear familiar and known. It is possible that this happens with objects of judgment. In this case, we can unambiguously speak of a learning process, where new conceptual apprehensions lead to new tacit coping mechanisms, as in learning how traffic lights work or how to use the pedals in driving a car. Husserl's main interest, however, goes out to habits in perception. Such perceptual habits are located at the level of passivity; they do not require any conceptual activity (Husserl 1997a, 121-124). Sometimes, Husserl uses the term *type* or *typified perception* to point to a sense of familiarity operating in passive perception (Husserl 1997a, 36, 124, 320, 334), which is what I will be focusing on in this section.[118]

[118] Husserl uses the notion of type in various different contexts. Most frequently, he uses it simply in its colloquial sense (type as equivalent of kind, style, way, etc.) and apparently without any strong terminological commitments in mind. My exposition here is much more narrowly focused

A very basic though admittedly non-Husserlian example of a type would be the passive recognition by a newborn child of the mother by scent. Broadly speaking, what happens here is that a passively constituted sense-formation (in the language of an adult speaker 'the mother') is accrued with a 'character of familiarity' or 'vague generality' (Husserl 1997a, 105). The child does not infer the idea of 'mother' from the scent, nor does s/he perceive with a synthetic concept of mother. Instead, s/he simply perceives *with* - or the scent is passively endowed with - a sense of non-conceptual familiarity and a vague generality. One way to describe types, then, is to say that they give *vague generality* and a *sense of familiarity* to passive perceptions, which is possible on the basis of a 'habit' attained through earlier experiences.

The advantage of the example of a newborn child is that we here see types operating in a consciousness that is yet incapable of acts of judgment in the pregnant sense. At this stage, there are no concepts developed which could be synthetically employed. The example thus helps to make evident the way types can figure in perceptual experiences independently of rational capacities. We find, however, the same processes operative in adult consciousness, which is the only kind of consciousness that can be the target of transcendental-phenomenological inquiry.

So how do types operate in our everyday experience? As an example, we can consider the sound of a roaring engine as one absent-mindedly wanders the streets. We notice that this sound is *in place* in this particular context - i.e. is contextualized as familiar - because one has heard similar sound in comparable situations before. Through such familiarity one also (passively) 'knows' whether one might have to make way for the car or whether one can simply 'ignore' it. One also 'knows' – in the form of horizonal expectations – what one might discover if one were to turn one's eyes to explicate the sound-object, and whether it is worth making such an effort. Likewise, when one for instance sees a dog on the street, typical apprehension will help unfold a system of implications regarding its inner features (its teeth, furriness, colors, the look of its other sides), its outer relations to things and people, and one's possible actions upon all that. Long story short: a vast space of pre-thinking interpretation, anticipation and possible future action is always already in place in a passive consciousness.

The examples of the newborn child, of background sound-perception, and of the perception of the dog are examples of pre-rational habitual operations. That

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on the idea of typified perception, also explored in admirable ways by Lohmar (2003).

is to say, they describe a familiarity with which a perceptual object is endowed independently of conceptual operations. This warrants, I think, a crucial conceptual distinction between *the type* as a form of passive habituality that provides contextualized familiarity, and (on the other hand) *conceptual generality* as we find it in judgments. The type is thus not a conceptual operation. Much of passive world-experience gains its regularity and familiarity not through concepts, but through various synthetic achievements that are entirely prior to thinking.

On my reading of Husserl, then, type-consciousness must be understood in terms of pre-conceptual habit-development, a process which can now further be specified by means of the concept of passive association (Husserl 1997a, 72-76; 2000, 231-238; 2001, 162-214). In *Chapter 6*, I analyzed the way in which sensation contents are passively pre-structured into fields through immanent association. This way, streams of hyletic data that resemble each other can be pre-structured as belonging together. These fields of sense always have their force of affection; they harbor affective tendencies which battle over the attention of the ego-subject, which can then perform intentional acts after having given in to the affection. Habitually attained types, on my suggestion, tie into this associative process. They are a form of immanent associative synthesis working on the basis of *resemblance* and *difference* just as discussed in *Chapter 6*. Typical apprehension, however, does not associate different sensation data, but the *intended* and the *previously intended*. As a result of this type of association, what belonged to the horizon of previous experiences is transferred to the ongoing experience, which provides the latter with enriched horizonal expectations and spaces for appropriate action.

Husserl remarks at several places that we never encounter objects that are completely new to us; every perception is accompanied by a sense of familiarity (Husserl 2000, 278, also Husserl 2008, 65). It is also granted possible, however, for a perception to occur with a failed typification. One might look at an artefact of some kind but have no idea what it is or what end it serves, or even whether it is a man-made artefact or a natural object. In such cases, as Husserl puts it, one has awareness 'that the object has a type, but [one] does not know it' (Husserl 2008, 159). Here the noetic function of typified perception is clearly in play; the type-intention goes out toward its object. However, it does not seem to hit target, and remains an empty intention instead.

Besides noting that every perception is accompanied with typical familiarity, Husserl entertains the idea that 'nothing in consciousness which has once been given in experience […] is lost, […] everything remains efficacious in that it

creates and develops a horizon of familiarities and known qualities, [even though] it has not yet become our possession, which henceforth we have at our disposal' (Husserl 1997a, 197). Husserl, then, strongly suggests that to experience is *always* to learn, and that experience is *always* provided a positive sense of familiarity through what has been previously learned.[119] Consequently, types – in spite of the underdeveloped nature of this notion in Husserl's philosophy – must be said to play a tremendously important role in Husserl's phenomenological theory of perception. All perception is familiar to some degree, and all future action pre-delineated to some extent. Moreover, each new perception may leave a lasting imprint upon consciousness and enter into this intricate process of habit-informed perception.

My reading, to summarize, entails that types are the result of habit, that its primary merit is to aid the production of horizonal awareness, patterns of expectations, and a space for appropriate future action, and that it is to be fleshed out in terms of associative syntheses between the intended and previously intended. These processes do not relate directly to conceptual thinking; they are *sui generis* operations of passive consciousness.

Schuetz (1959), in an early contribution on this topic, suggests instead that types are a kind of pre-concepts. They are not conceptual, but they latently contain the concepts under which we may come to structure them syntactically. This suggestion runs parallel to the idea that bound ideality already latently contain *a priori* universals, as Husserl explicitly remarks in *Experience and Judgment*. In the same way, Schuetz suggests, the difference between type and concept would be merely gradual. The types already contain reference to the ideal objects to which our concepts correspond.

Regarding Schuetz's suggestion, I am inclined to resist the idea that the kind of contextualized familiarity which structures our everyday, passive experience is necessarily a kind of pre-conceptual synthesis which already latently contains concepts. This is primarily because Husserl explicitly notes that there is nothing like conceptual generality constituted at the level of passivity (Husserl 1997a, 239). Concepts, or ideal contents, on Husserl's view, are really something quite different from anything happening at receptive levels. Put differently, Husserl maintains a categorical distinction between the contents of perception and the

[119] This should not withstand that habits can come to lose their force if they are not employed frequently or may change if experience learns they are no longer accurate, see Husserl (2008, 47-48).

ideal contents of thought.[120] Although conceptual relations are in some ways *pre-figured* in perception, this pre-figuring is still of a different kind than found within the various levels of conceptual activity, where we do have one type of ideal content latently containing the *a priori* essence. Therefore, the kind of pre-figuring at stake here cannot straightforwardly be identified as one of perception's latent containment of essences.

Second, on my reading, we should be careful to characterize typical perception as a form of conceptual, *rule-bound* perception. In this respect, it is worth pointing out that the examples of typified perception discussed do not seem to provide any well-marked rules for interpretation as concepts do. Husserl's claim is that any simple perception presents an object that is already familiar to us in various ways. This is quite different from suggesting that what we see is structured by a distinctive rule. The type's main merit need not in fact necessarily be construed along the lines of conceptuality at all. In hearing a car passing by, what is experienced is a familiar scene with networks of horizons which disclose spaces for appropriate action. The structure of perception is here *practically* oriented; one stands in a partially pre-delineated space for practical action. Even where the experience aims for fulfillment, this is still a practical 'knowledge' which has virtually nothing to do with seeing something as an instance of some universal concept. The normative rule-character of the type, therefore, need not be construed in terms of latent concepts.

This should conclude my discussion of passively originating habit. I discussed (i) habits of the body (correlations of movement and perception) in the constitution of space and three-dimensional things, (ii) the norms involved in constituting a thing's realness, and (iii) the role of passively originating types in perception. All three forms of passive habit are in everyday experience usually permeated with higher-level, conceptual habits as well. Husserl maintains, however, that these passive habits do not *require* such intellectual operations, because they are *sui generis* forms of synthesis of passive consciousness.

### *7.2.5. Conceptual Capacities in Perception*

The previous sections showed that for Husserl not every form of habit is a result of cultural formation or intellectual activity. Habits can also find their origin in passive perception. Here too, however, it makes sense to speak of different levels

[120] This corresponds to his ontological distinction between the real and the ideal.

of habit-operation. The habitualized sensorimotor correlations involved in the constitution of space seem of a lower level than the norms governing the realness of colors. In fact, perceiving a colored object already presupposes spatial extension of a body (as substrate of the color) and therefore is an achievement 'founded' upon the sorts of phenomenological processes constitutive of spatial extension. In such ways, higher level perceptual achievements incorporate lower level ones, which make the former – if rational in origin – always necessarily of a hybrid rational/pre-rational character.

On the reading I have given, passive habits aid the accomplishments required for the rudimentary layout of the perceptual world, including its spatiality, motion, causal regularities, and certain typical familiarities. Like most philosophers today Husserl too would prefer not to speak of knowledge when it comes to passive habitual familiarity. No passively originating habit yields knowledge in the demanding sense of the term. Yet, as I elaborated in *Chapter 5*, Husserl does not regard passive accomplishments as mere phenomena belonging to nature either. Passive habitual 'knowledge' and genuine propositional knowledge can both be understood from a single (non-natural) realm of explanation – the complete purified stream of consciousness – and any philosophy concerned with clarifying objectivity must – according to Husserl – address this structure in its entirety.

Apart from passively originating habit, Husserl is well aware that cognitive achievements – those which the ego-subject actively accomplishes – likewise affect how the world is passively presented. The perceptual world of ordinary waking life is hugely indebted to habits of a conceptual kind. Husserl notes at various places that the perceptual world is intellectually invested: we always see 'a world in which cognition in the most diverse ways has already done its work' (Husserl 1997a, 31); the field of perception is 'impregnated by the precipitate of logical operations' (Husserl 1997a, 42). The world in which we spend our lives as responsible agents is thoroughly invested with rational capacities, something we might refer to as *conceptual habit* (in contradistinction to passive habit).

This shows that in spite of the fact that passivity for Husserl is – in contrast with what conceptualism specifies –the 'mother soil' of rationality, the world in which we spend our lives as responsible agents is thoroughly conceptually invested. Intellectual activity works its way back into passivity. Attaining such conceptual habits certainly is not a private occurrence. The perceptual world, as is especially clear from Husserl's later work, is structured as an inter-subjective world. The world always implies in its horizonal structure the practical activities

of other human beings (Husserl 2008, 319). In seeing a cultural object, horizonal implications immediately go out to the givenness of other people, to practical ends set by people and habitually known by the community (Husserl 2008, 58). This is not restricted to cultural objects: whatever is the target of the ego-subject's attention is experienced as a 'constituent of existence accessible to everyone' (Husserl 1974b, 20).

Cultural dimensions also pervade horizonal awareness of the world as a whole – a 'world-horizon' Husserl thinks is co-given in any object-perception, indeed in all waking life experience (Husserl 2008, 60). The world as a whole is always implicitly known to be there in attentive perception. When one turns around and perceives a book on the desk, it is tacitly known to have been 'already there' before the turning-toward (Husserl 2008, 61). 'Every real thing is from the start apperceived as a real thing in the universal spatio-temporal world' (Husserl 2008, 116) – here understood not as the mathematically determinable manifold of natural science, but as a far outer horizonal structure of experience.

According to Husserl, horizonal awareness of the world is principally that of a cultural world. There is a *typical world-horizon* in perception, encompassing the global structure of the unfolding of things and the network of typical habitualities with which things and the world by and large are endowed for a community of subjects. Certain typical apprehensions – one's familiarity with certain objects, buildings, practices, etc. – belong specifically to the cultural world one was raised in, to one's own community of people (Husserl 2008, 160-170). Human experience takes place in cultural world-horizons; within the life unity of a people, a cultural group, a nation (Husserl 2008, 58-59). It is pre-structured by a sense of a 'home world'; of the tradition and history in which one was raised – historical structures of consciousness determining a broader world-horizon which can clash with 'other worlds' (Husserl 2008, 115-159). The familiar things showing up in perception principally stand in a communally – although not strictly universally – shared cultural lifeworld. While we certainly understand each other and all worldly things generally as existing in a single spatiotemporal world, 'each of us only understands this in the form of one's own generative [cultural] home world – and this in turn [for each person] in their own private and momentary form [in living experience]' (Husserl 2008, 163).

Husserl, then, considers perception as thoroughly impregnated by conceptual operations through the development of habit. Furthermore, perception of things always involves tacit awareness of a broader world. Thing-experience and the world-horizon which surrounds it are permeated with a sense of community and

cultural practice. Taking Husserl's later work on habit into account, we thus arrive at a much more intricate picture of perceptual experience than is reflected in much of the earlier works. Perception is not a simple receptivity of sense data, nor an exclusive result of conceptual synthesis ('top-down'), nor a one-sided foundation for rationality ('bottom-up'). Instead, perceptual synthesis can only be understood by referring to consciousness's whole life, including its intrinsically historical being. Ultimately, Husserl came to see that world-involvements at the perceptual level refer in the very sense of their accomplishments to world-involvements at higher conceptual levels. The perceptual-kinetic world founds our culture and rationality, but the latter also defines the structure and content of the former.

This seems to point to a certain holistic and perhaps even hermeneutic (see Drummond 1991, 62) understanding of the perception-judgment relation in the later Husserl. Yet I think we should again be careful to distinguish the descriptive-phenomenological clarification Husserl pursues from an account of belief justification (which is better reflected in the discussions in *Chapter 3*, where justification is specified as the fullness intuitive acts deliver to meaning acts). Husserl's later work does not assert that a belief is justified *because* of its hanging together in a reciprocally determining, coherent whole (as coherentists generally specify). The investigations of this chapter considered Husserl's attempt at a deeper, genetic-phenomenological clarification of perception, judgment, and their relations and mutual determinations. The results this yielded do not withstand Husserl's ideas developed early on in his career that justification is a matter of direct intuition. For Husserl, *intuitive fullness* is the sole justificatory principle – no matter the complex, mutually founding relations which condition the very possibility of such intuition and of world-experience itself.

### *7.2.6. Concluding Remarks*

In this chapter I considered broadly three aspects of Husserl's genetically layered approach to perception that *Chapter 6* left unaddressed: (i) the transition from perception to judgment, (ii) the structures and ideal contents of acts of judgment, and (iii) the impact of habit (both conceptual and pre-conceptual) on perceptual experience. To close this chapter, let me briefly summarize its main results.

Regarding the first (i), I argued that the contents of acts of perception and judgment must be rigidly differentiated (as opposed to hard conceptualism, which takes perceptual contents as concepts). Only acts of judgments contain contents

that are ideal, repeatable, and principally shareable with others. This amounts to saying that the contents of simple perception (which are not ideal) are by their essence not propositionally articulated. Perception, therefore, does not have propositionally articulated content. At the same time, perceptual content is passively pre-structured independently (namely in the passive sphere) of intellectual capacities for categorially intuiting those very structures. To judge in the proper sense then means (ii) to make those structures explicit; to *turn back* to the perceptual pre-articulations from which the propositional state of affairs can be 'extracted'. Apart from the case of extraction, I also distinguished between bound and free ideality as higher forms of thought contents.

Regarding (iii) the impacts of habit upon perceptual experience, I showed that Husserl thinks passive habits are involved already at the lowest strata of object-constitution, in the perceptual apprehension of things as spatially extended. Passively originating habits further govern the reality-sense of things and properties by tacitly setting principles of normality which regulate experience.

While *Chapter 6* revealed that perception does not inherently rely on operations of thinking – it is rather the soil in which reason has its genesis – Husserl's work on habit discussed here points to a more complicated picture of the synthetic structure of perception. Rationality, traces of community, but also passively originating habits pervade simple perception and the horizons belonging to it. Relations of foundation do not run merely in one direction. Ultimately, then, it seems that for Husserl no aspect of the streaming life of consciousness can be wholly understood without drawing on the whole of it, including its very own past.

# Conclusion

This final section presents a brief discussion of the most interesting findings this research has yielded. I will not aim for a comprehensive overview, but instead try to highlight some of the main threads developed over the course of this work. The following discussions are divided thematically, but they follow up on each other in roughly the same order in which the chapters proceeded.

*On Kant's Conceptualism, Skepticism, and Transcendental Philosophy (Chapter 1)*

Today, Kant is frequently regarded the earliest proponent of a conceptualist view about perceptual content. The exact form of conceptualism at stake here is, however, a matter of debate. In the first chapter of this dissertation, I investigated contemporary debates revolving around Kant's conceptualist views. I did so by first exposing the tension from which today's discussions about Kantian conceptualism depart. In brief, I showed that Kant separates sensible intuitions from the conceptual linkages of thought, and furthermore expressly regards the former as non-conceptual. At the same time, however, he also seems to think the syntheses productive of our perceptual takings already stand under conceptual rules. The apparent contradiction between both claims is the source of most ongoing discussions on Kantian conceptualism.

I argued, however, that the tension is only apparent. On the reading I offered, Kant is a conceptualist about perceptual experience in spite of the fact that he also subscribes to a non-conceptual faculty of sensibility as a condition of possibility for this. These two claims are, I suggested, despite initial appearance perfectly compatible. I then proposed to call the thesis that our perceptual contents are all conceptually structured *full conceptualism*. For Kant as for McDowell, full conceptualism is motivated by a desire to satisfy *weak conceptualism*, which entails that our perceptual contents are open to rational scrutiny. For Kant, however, the openness in case concerns only our *a priori* judgment, and the necessary role of concepts in perception is for Kant restricted to pure concepts (I called this *category conceptualism*, as a subclass of full conceptualism).

Contemporary literature on Kantian conceptualism frequently abstracts from the specific motivations Kant has for advancing his theory of conceptual synthesis in perception. Often, even the relatively obvious fact that conceptualism is here restricted to pure concepts alone is ignored. To my mind, understanding the broader philosophical views of Kant's transcendental

philosophy is essential to coming to terms with his conceptualist views. With regard to this, I argued that two further points are of particular interest. The first concerns the skepticism Kant's category conceptualism wishes to address. On my reading, it is the threat of skepticism which brings Kant to make the Copernican turn and to posit a set of pure concepts in us which are not derived from perceptual experience, but instead determine it *a priori*. This makes conceptualism here first and foremost a kind of solution to the puzzle of Humean skepticism.

The second important point is the fact that Kant's conceptualism departs from an accepted existence of synthetic *a priori* cognitions in mathematics and pure natural science. The very idea of pure concepts (and their *a priori* determination of perception which is subsequent on this) is here not proven with some kind of direct intuitive evidence as Husserl's phenomenological methodology has it. Also, it does not serve plainly to bring the experienced world within the space of responsive to reasons as with McDowell. Instead, Kant basically infers the thesis of the pure concepts from the alleged fact of our synthetic *a priori* cognitions, and believes the latter fact by itself indeed suffices to disprove a Humean theory of the derivation of these concepts (CPR B128). In short, then, the Kantian picture of pure concepts determining perception is not so much a phenomenological or psychological theory of perception, but instead a very specific philosophical doctrine fulfilling equally specific anti-skeptical purposes.

*On McDowell's Conceptualism and Non-Conceptualists (Chapter 2)*

It goes without saying that McDowell qualifies as the main representative of the conceptualist thesis today. In *Chapter 2,* I assessed McDowell's conceptualist theory in some detail as well as the ongoing debates about non-conceptual content. I started out explaining his conceptualism in the same way he does it in *Mind and World*, namely by referring to a so-called state of oscillation modern epistemology has ostensibly fallen prey to. McDowell's solution to this is to suggest that our perceptual takings have conceptual content. This way, a minimal empiricism and a perceptual responsive to reasons can be accounted for, while simultaneously a frictionless spinning of reason and the myth of the given are avoided. Although McDowell is ambiguous as to what conceptual content would mean exactly, I argued the central thesis he defends is *weak conceptualism* – although there are recurring remarks which suggest full conceptualism as well.

While in *Mind and World* McDowell suggests a close affiliation between himself

and Kant, I argued that their conceptualist theories in fact differ substantially. McDowell's conceptualism does not concern pure concepts specifically nor does it serve to ward off skepticism regarding synthetic *a priori* cognitions. Likewise, conceptualism for Kant did not serve to guarantee perceptual responsiveness to reasons in general; it only concerned our *a priori* cognitions.

Besides addressing the epistemological dilemma McDowell's conceptualism responds to, I discussed how McDowell's theory fits into a bigger philosophical picture of man's place in reality. I showed that McDowell aims to assert a certain autonomy of human reason which is nonetheless rooted in a common sense naturalism. Not unimportantly, he believes the conceptual space of reasons and it *alone* escapes the explanatory realm of lawful scientific determination. This means non-rational animal sensibility, for example, unproblematically fits the paradigm of lawful explanation, but that our rationally invested perceptual responsiveness to reasons does not. However, although this *sui generis* space of reasons is not lawfully assessable, McDowell contends that it should not be considered extra-natural either. To this end he introduced a notion of *Bildung,* thereby suggesting a kind of natural born capacity for a in a sense 'non-natural' space of reasons.

The second part of *Chapter 2* dealt with contemporary debates about non-conceptual content. The overview of arguments I offered here indicated that there are compelling reasons to posit non-conceptual content, but also that they rarely pose any serious problems for conceptualists. This situation is, I argued, primarily due to the fact that non-conceptualists tend to draw on psychological and/or phenomenological descriptions of perceptual experience, and are generally insufficiently concerned with what conceptualism (whether Kant's form or McDowell's) actually specifies.

*On Sensations and Epistemic Justification in Logical Investigations (Chapter 3)*

*Logical Investigations* presents Husserl's first detailed account of intentionality and offers a remarkably novel theory of epistemic justification. These two themes were the focal points of my discussions in *Chapter 3*. Regarding the first, I outlined the basics of Husserl's theory of intentionality as exposed in the fifth book and zoomed in specifically on problems posed by instincts, dark longings, and sensory contents. I argued that Husserl's reading of sensations as 'building blocks' of intentionality is still underdeveloped here, but that it does not disagree with his later views. On my interpretation, already in the fifth book, sensation contents are specified as non-intentional (if considered for themselves), even

though they can be taken up into intentional acts. This view is, as *Chapter 4* and *6* revealed, maintained in *Ideas I* and further elaborated in later genetic writings.

The most important part of *Chapter 3* dealt with Husserl's views on epistemic justification, described phenomenologically as a synthesis of fulfillment, whereby an intuitive act brings fullness to an empty meaning act. For Husserl, I argued, justification is always a matter of intuitive fullness supplied to meaning acts, that is: of empty intentions fulfilled by intuitive acts giving something clearly as it is. The core of this theory of epistemic justification in terms of the evidence intuitive fullness supplies to empty acts is, on my reading, not abandoned by Husserl in later work. This means that for Husserl truth, knowledge, and justified belief are principally to be understood as a matter of direct intuitive insight, i.e. of something giving itself clearly as that what it is.

Crucially, there are no particular constraints on the *way* this presentation of a thing giving itself takes place. In other words, I showed that for Husserl it is not necessarily the bearing of our conceptual meaning constructs onto empirical intuition that is at stake in intuitive fullness. Husserl rejects the influential Kantian separation of sensibility and understanding, and appropriates epistemic justification entirely in synthetic terms, as the synthesis of empty meaning acts and full intuitive acts, where the latter class incorporates categorial and eidetic intuitive acts, among others.

*On Intentionality and the Expressibility of the Noema (Chapter 4)*

Husserl altered and further expounded his theory of intentionality in *Ideas I*, which publically announced his turn to transcendental idealism. In *Chapter 4* I examined this adapted theory and considered how it relates to debates about non-conceptual content and conceptualism. I argued first that Husserl subscribes to forms of non-conceptual content also defended by some analytic philosophers today. This concerned the notion of *hyle* in particular, which can be read as the successor of the concept of sensation in *Logical Investigations*. Although the notion of hyle does not refer to anything on the side of the presented content (*what* we perceive), I argued that its continuous changes are in fact reflected in what we perceive as well. In this sense at least, perceptual experience for Husserl always involves non-conceptual content.

Regarding the question of conceptualism, I argued that *Ideas I* and *Ideas II* offer evidence that Husserl sees the presented content (the noema) of an intentional act as principally an expressible content. That is to say, every

intentional act contains (but is not exhausted by) a content that can be articulated in a judgment. This, I argued, effectively amounts to a form of weak conceptualism – a thesis which *Chapter 6* showed to be further affirmed in the later genetic writings on passive synthesis.

*On Transcendental-Phenomenological Epistemology and the Scope of Philosophy (Chapter 5)*

The most significant development of Husserl's phenomenology in the early twentieth century is its transformation into a transcendental philosophy. In *Chapter 5,* I examined the nature of Husserl's commitment to transcendental idealism as well as the method of phenomenological reduction. I discussed the importance of the phenomenological suspension of theory, methods of reasoning, and prejudices that stem from natural thinking. This extensive suspension includes, in a specific sense, even the existence of the real world. The purpose of such suspensions is to bring pure consciousness into view exclusively in terms of its own being, which is subsequently designated as the target field of phenomenological inquiry. Consciousness thus considered is not a natural-causal phenomenon, but the absolute stream of experience which remains as an indubitable realm of being after suspending our ordinary, natural way of comporting toward things.

Regarding Husserl's commitment to transcendental idealism, I argued that Husserl's claim to a transcendental science rests on the acceptance of what Husserl calls the universal *a priori* correlation, which stipulates the essential relation of being to consciousness. In short, Husserl believes he can ascribe a transcendental status to phenomenology because all being is inevitably being *as* given to consciousness. The phenomenologist can thus be said to study the very same world we ordinarily study and live in, albeit from a different standpoint or attitude, namely *qua* givenness to consciousness.

As further discussed in *Chapter 5,* Husserl holds strict views on what a philosopher can and cannot make claim to. Pure consciousness as field of rigorous philosophical inquiry is not one option among so many others; it is considered the *only* true path to philosophy, one which makes all other forms of philosophy obsolete. Moreover, transcendental phenomenology is not restricted to a fundamental epistemology as with Kant, nor does it proceed by investigating only the pure forms of cognition after abstracting from all concrete content. Instead, phenomenology includes the transcendental *a priori* clarification of *everything* that meaningfully speaking is. This transcendental-phenomenological

task proceeds as the pure description of the ways things give themselves according to their very own essences, which are accessible on the basis of immediate intuitive insight. This, I argued, is very different with Kant, where a method of abstraction yields pure forms subsequently inferred to lie in us.

At the same time, in spite of the all-encompassing scope Husserl ascribes to transcendental phenomenology, I argued that he understands the status of transcendental knowledge *vis-à-vis* objective-scientific knowledge quite modestly. Unlike earlier modern philosophers (such as Locke, Descartes, and even Kant), Husserl does not aim at uncovering basic perceptions or absolutely evident propositions from which scientific knowledge can be derived or through which its validity is somehow secured. The principle task of transcendental phenomenology is to offer final *clarifications*, not to justify or secure knowledge claims that lie outside of the scope of its well-delineated research field.

*On Transcendental Consciousness and the Space of Reasons (Chapter 5)*

Transcendental phenomenology, as the first half of *Chapter 5* elaborated, thus aims to clarify the final sense of knowledge and being. This task takes shape as the unbiased description of pure experience. By completely suspending the presumptuous claim of real being made by experience in the natural attitude onto which the objective sciences are all erected, we 'reduce' world-experience to pure consciousness. On ground of the delivered proof of the universal *a priori* correlation of being and consciousness, pure consciousness is then taken to set the scope of all being, which subsequently renders phenomenology transcendental.

The second part of *Chapter 5* juxtaposed this conception of philosophy to McDowell's. One of the key points here developed concerns the naturalism McDowell accepts as the right departure point for his (alleged) quietist philosophy. By comparison to Husserl, I showed that McDowell's conceptualist theory and his 'relaxed naturalism' are convincing only on ground of certain contestable premises. Most important of these is the naturalism which undergirds his construal of spaces of reason and nature, which his conceptualism fits into through a rather shadowy notion of *Bildung*. Equally important is the idea inherited from modern Anglophone philosophy that whatever provides belief warrant must already be within a structure of concepts. From Husserl's viewpoint, I characterized these and other ideas as misleading theoretical conceptions that should not affect pure philosophical investigations. Among

others, they bring McDowell to label pre-conceptual syntheses as merely lawful phenomena and to portray our perceptual contents as exclusively conceptual – both of which are at the cost of the actual phenomenology of perceptual experience and its relation to reason.

I argued that Husserl's account differs from McDowell's in respect both of its radical freedom from prejudice as well as its systematic delineation of the right task and scope of philosophical research. For Husserl, the whole streaming life of pure consciousness can be drawn upon in describing the contents of perception and the structure of belief warrant. This, I claimed, effectively relieves Husserl of the need for a conceptualist theory to satisfy the theoretical demands McDowell thinks he must answer to.

Lastly, Husserl's focus on the unitary life of consciousness as the right field of philosophical inquiry allows him to look for a genesis of reason outside of reason itself, namely in our pre-conceptual and even pre-intentional sense-makings. This, I argued, is inconceivable (for different reasons) for both Kant and McDowell. This genesis of reason became my subsequent concern in the final two chapters, where I dealt with Husserl's genetic phenomenology.

*On the Passive Foundations of Judgment and the Role of Habit (Chapter 6 and 7)*

The final two chapters, *Chapter 6* and *Chapter 7,* were devoted to discussing Husserl's genetic-phenomenological theory of perception, his analyses of judgment-contents, and the impact rationality has on perceptual experience. In *Chapter 6,* I first offered an interpretation of the peculiar aims of Husserl's genetic phenomenology, and of how to understand the idea of a genesis of reason in passive experience. I then discussed his detailed analyses of perceptual experience, and argued that there are three main levels to be distinguished here.

First, there are fields of sensations, which are characterized by the law of immanent association on the basis of likeness and difference and by their affective structure. The contents of fields of sensation are, just as with the notion of sensation of *Logical Investigations* and hyle of *Ideas I,* non-intentional. By contrast, the second and third level of perception do yield intentional contents. Moreover, passive perception is here capable of presenting things in a syntactically pre-structured fashion, that is, structured *prior to* and *independently of* the capacity to explicate those structures through judgments. This, I argued, contrasts sharply with the general conceptualist idea that the passive perceptual field is intrinsically dependent on rational capacities.

While *Chapter 6* thus revealed the roots of our very capacity for conceptual thought in pre-conceptual perceptual-kinetic synthesis, Husserl's later work on habit also shows reverse relations of foundation. In *Chapter 7,* I offered an interpretation of Husserl's dispersed analyses on habit. Together, these can be taken to form a beginning to a kind of phenomenology of *Bildung* – here of course understood within the space of pure consciousness and not as a genesis of second nature out of first nature. I argued that for Husserl the knowable world throughout bears the marks of conceptual habits of thought. Husserl, therefore, acknowledges the pervasive impact of rational capacities on operations of sensibility. Moreover, this function of habit is not restricted to rational operations, but equally operates at the pre-conceptual level of bodily movement and simple perception. For instance, Husserl takes the spatiality of objects to be due to habitualizations of a passive perceptual-kinetic consciousness, rather than resulting from conceptual operations.

It can thus be concluded that for the later Husserl, founding relations between perception and judgment are much more complex than the conceptualist viewpoint can acknowledge. While in one sense passive perception conditions active judgment, all experience simultaneously works its way back into passive consciousness through habit. This seems to warrant Drummond's claim that 'foundations present themselves in the form of a hermeneutic circle. […] [they are] *reciprocally* related to one another' (Drummond 1991, 62).

Yet, I argued, we should be careful to note that Husserl does not consider beliefs to be justified *because* of their hanging together in a complex, coherent whole in which parts are reciprocally determined. The complex relations of foundation of perception and judgment characterizing the later investigations do not, on my understanding, point to some form of truth coherentism or hermeneutics. Husserl always maintained that beliefs can only be justified in direct intuition, i.e.: in acts which give something just as it is, with varying degrees of clarity and intuitive fullness. Rather than contradicting this view, the later work can be taken to reveal that even the formation of the most indubitable propositions does not occur in complete independence of our perceptual experiences, other beliefs, one's past, and one's culturally determined world-horizons. Direct intuition thus remains the sole justificatory principle for Husserl, no matter the complex, mutually founding relations which condition the very possibility of such intuition and of world-experience itself.

*Husserl: Conceptualism or Non-Conceptualism?*

It seems fair for the reader to expect me to directly confront the question that guided this research at its closure. I hope to have sufficiently shown, however, that the results – or perhaps, in Husserlian parlor, '*die Sachen selbst*' – do not allow for a straightforward answer to be given. I devoted much effort in this dissertation to exposing the meaning and function of conceptualism within the larger philosophical outlooks of Kant and McDowell. While this made a deeper understanding of the attractiveness of conceptualism to them apparent, it simultaneously put most arguments for non-conceptual content on a somewhat different track. By subsequently turning to Husserl, I tried to reveal systematically that the forces that render conceptualism attractive to Kant and McDowell make no comparable appeal on Husserl. At the same time, I argued that this does not withstand that Husserl supports a weak conceptualist thesis regarding the openness of noematic contents to rational scrutiny, and that he acknowledges the role of conceptual capacities and inter-subjectively structured horizonal awareness in perception.

# Samenvatting

**Husserl over Concepten in Waarneming**

Afgelopen decennia is een toenemende interesse ontstaan in de fenomenologie (letterlijk: de studie van fenomenen) in een breed scala aan discussies over het bewustzijn. In deze dissertatie verbind ik Husserls (1859-1938) fenomenologische leer met hedendaagse debatten aangaande de structuren en inhouden van het bewustzijn. De nadruk ligt hierbij op het vraagstuk of waarneming conceptuele en /of niet-conceptuele inhouden kent.

Het is in de hedendaagse filosofie gewoon te spreken over het bewustzijn als gevuld met inhoud. Momenteel ziet u bijvoorbeeld dit papier, leest u de tekst, hoort u een verscheidenheid aan achtergrondgeluiden, enzovoorts. Dit alles tezamen vormt de inhoud van uw bewustzijn, precies op de manier waarop u het ervaart. Een beschrijving van de verschillende mogelijke inhouden van het bewustzijn is een nagenoeg eindeloze taak en brengt diepgaande filosofische problemen van allerhande aard met zich mee. In deze dissertatie staat in het bijzonder één zo'n probleem centraal: zijn de inhouden van waarneming conceptueel van aard?

Filosofen die stellen dat waarneming uitsluitend conceptuele inhoud heeft worden *conceptualisten* genoemd. Het conceptualisme moet hier voornamelijk begrepen worden als een theorie aangaande de inhoud van waarneming met betrekking tot ons vermogen erover te denken of te oordelen. Met andere woorden, het betreft hier een stelling die vooral de epistemologie (kenleer) aangaat.

Er is vandaag de dag veel discussie over de conceptuele of niet-conceptuele inhoud van onze waarneming. Het grootste deel van de discussies draait hier om John McDowell (1942-). Daarnaast is Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) een centrale figuur, niet alleen vanwege zijn vaak toegekende status als eerste conceptualist in de moderne filosofie maar ook vanwege McDowells filosofische verwantschap met hem. In dit onderzoek behandel ik het conceptualisme dan ook voornamelijk aan de hand van deze twee filosofen.

Grof gesteld past het conceptualisme in Kants waarnemingstheorie als een antwoord op scepticisme. In het eerste hoofdstuk van dit onderzoek laat ik zien dat Kant de fundamentele principes van zuivere wetenschap ziet als gevormd door de ordeningsprincipes van ons eigen denken en waarnemen. Volgens Kant opereren de fundamentele capaciteiten van ons denkvermogen ook op onze

waarneming en maken ze deze überhaupt mogelijk. Kant denkt dat dit hem in staat stelt de objectieve geldigheid van bepaalde kennisoordelen te waarborgen op een manier die het scepticisme van bijvoorbeeld Hume weerstand biedt.

Waar Kant wellicht beschouwd kan worden als de eerste conceptualist van enigerlei vorm is het McDowell die het conceptualisme voor filosofen vandaag op de agenda heeft gezet. Voor hem is het conceptualisme een theorie over de rol van waarnemen in het leveren van redenen en verantwoordingen voor onze opvattingen. Conceptuele inhoud aan waarneming toekennen moet hier vooral verklaren hoe onze waarnemingen deel uit kunnen maken van het domein van rationele verantwoording. Door te stellen dat waarneming conceptuele inhoud heeft denkt McDowell dat we een correspondentie tussen denken en wereld kunnen behouden zonder een zekere naturalistische denkfout te begaan die onze zintuiglijkheid een soort brugfunctie toekent tussen ons denken en een externe wereld. Tegelijkertijd zou zijn theorie van conceptuele waarneming weerstand moeten bieden tegen vormen van coherentisme die ons denken lijken te isoleren van een externe wereld.

McDowells conceptualisme is uiteindelijk niet alleen een theorie betreffende onze waarnemingsinhoud maar ook een filosofische opvatting over onze plek in de wereld. Dit grotere plaatje is geworteld in een naturalisme dat niet de autonomie van de menselijke rede wil comprimeren. Hoewel McDowell vindt dat zintuiglijkheid een natuurlijk voorkomen is dat geheel valt binnen natuurwetenschappelijke onderzoeksvelden, wil hij ook tegemoet komen aan de intuïtie dat onze acties en overtuigingen niet vallen binnen het domein van natuurlijke wetgeving. Voor McDowell past het conceptualisme binnen dit bredere filosofische programma, waarmee hij een oorspronkelijke intelligibiliteit wil toekennen aan het domein van menselijke rede en verantwoording, zonder daarmee te suggereren dat het geheel losgekoppeld is van het natuurlijke.

Dit korte overzicht van Kant en McDowell – uitgebreider behandeld in de eerste twee hoofdstukken – geeft al aan dat ondanks een oppervlakkige overeenkomst tussen beide ten aanzien van de rol van concepten in waarneming het conceptualisme voor beide verschillend gemotiveerd is en andere doeleinden dient. Zodoende betekent het conceptualisme iets heel anders voor beide. Alleen door te kijken naar het bredere plaatje waarin conceptualisme ontworpen wordt valt goed te begrijpen wat de filosofische waarde ervan is. Zoals ik verder in het tweede hoofdstuk laat zien abstraheren tegenhangers van het conceptualisme (non-conceptualisten) hier maar al te vaak van, en verdedigen daarmee vormen van niet-conceptuele waarnemingsinhoud die nauwelijks of geen betrekking

hebben op het soort filosofische zaken dat conceptualisten aangaat.

Kant en McDowell hebben dus beide hun motieven om conceptuele inhoud aan waarneming toe te kennen. Toch is het ook niet geheel onterecht beide theorieën als Kantiaans te bestempelen. McDowell zelf ziet zijn theorie in zekere verwantschap met die van Kant en vertrekt dan ook vanuit gelijke basispresupposities, zoals een scheiding van een natuurlijke zintuiglijkheid en een spontaan denkvermogen. Zo beschouwd zou het natuurlijk heel interessant zijn om te kijken naar het conceptualisme van Kant en McDowell en de filosofische problemen en opvattingen die eraan ten grondslag liggen vanuit een geheel ander perspectief – niet alleen om een of ander nieuw antwoord op het conceptualismevraagstuk te vinden, maar ook om te zien wat er dan precies gebeurt met de vraag zelf.

Dit brengt me tot Husserl en de vraag naar de rol van concepten in waarneming in zijn filosofie. Mijn motivatie om naar Husserl te kijken is precies dat we hier conceptueel gereedschap aan zouden kunnen treffen dat het conceptualisme in een ander daglicht kan zetten. Er bestaat vandaag al enige discussie met betrekking tot de vraag of Husserl een conceptualist is of niet. Deze dissertatie behelst echter de eerste volledige studie van Husserls filosofie ten aanzien van dit vraagstuk. Daarnaast is mijn interesse hier niet beperkt tot de vraag of Husserl een conceptualist is of welke vormen van non-conceptuele inhoud hij voorschrijft. Nog interessanter is de vraag wat we kunnen leren van Husserl met betrekking tot het begrijpen van de redenen die aan de verschillende vormen van conceptualisme ten grondslag liggen.

Husserl staat bekend als de grondlegger van een discipline genaamd fenomenologie. Dit is, kort gesteld, een wetenschap van zuivere ervaring. Volgens Husserl is het gebaseerd op een speciale attitude van de onderzoeker die empirische aannames uitsluit teneinde de zuivere ervaring in termen van haar eigen wezen te beschrijven (de eerste persoons 'ervaringsrealiteit' in plaats van de empirische of objectieve realiteit). In zijn latere werk krijgt deze systematische studie van het bewustzijn een transcendentale dimensie. In de geest van een alomvattend transcendentaal idealisme wordt de wereld nu begrepen als ondenkbaar behalve als correlaat van een mogelijk bewustzijn. De fenomenologie krijgt daardoor een status als eerste filosofie; zij geeft de laatste verklaring van hoe wij kennis vergaren van de wereld en zelfs van wat de wereld überhaupt is.

Husserl zag de fenomenologie dus niet alleen als ervaringsstudie maar ook als een funderende wetenschap. Hoewel opgezet als een systematische, collaboratieve wetenschap wordt Husserls leer toch door weinigen beschouwd als

eenvoudig of kristalhelder. Dit is ten dele te wijten aan het feit dat Husserl zijn filosofie baseert op een ongekend radicale vrijheid van vooroordelen. Zelfs ons natuurwetenschappelijk denken dat zich verhoudt tot een zelfstandig bestaande wereld wordt hier uitgesloten als gebaseerd op onvoldoende gefundeerde aannames. Hierdoor kan Husserl ook niet gezien worden als een empirisch of naturalistisch filosoof, zoals Kant (en vooral McDowell) dat uiteindelijk wel zijn.

Dit punt is essentieel omdat, zoals ik in mijn dissertatie uitgebreid behandel, bepaalde natuurwetenschappelijke motieven ten grondslag liggen aan het conceptualisme van zowel Kant als McDowell. Kants transcendentale filosofie vertrekt vanuit een acceptatie van het bestaan van synthetisch *a priori* cognities in wiskunde en natuurwetenschap. Daarnaast is Kants transcendentaal onderzoek gelimiteerd tot alleen de meest universele vormen van wetenschappelijke cognitie die overblijven wanneer van alle concrete inhoud geabstraheerd wordt. Kants conceptualistische opvattingen, zo toon ik aan in mijn onderzoek, zijn nauw aan deze methodische opvatting verbonden, omdat conceptualisme hier juist de conceptuele vorming van waarneming door alleen die universele vormen betreft. McDowells naturalisme daarentegen is voornamelijk op te maken uit zijn Aristotelische notie van de mens als rationeel dier, dat wil zeggen: allereerst een *natuurlijk* dier, en ten tweede met een oorspronkelijke rationaliteit. McDowells conceptualisme haakt in op dit plaatje als een alternatieve manier om onze plek in de natuurlijke wereld te begrijpen.

Natuurlijk reageert ook Husserl op de wetenschappelijke ontwikkelingen van zijn tijd. Maar zijn systematisch en strak afgebakende opvattingen over de aard van filosofische onderzoek sluit juist alle externe motieven *vis-à-vis* de beschrijving van het zuivere bewustzijn uit. Dit omvat al het natuurlijke denken, theoretische constructie en zelfs logische argumentatie. Husserl beschouwt bovendien deze fenomenologische methode als de enige juiste manier van filosofie bedrijven. Echte filosofie, aldus Husserl, kan alleen gedaan worden wanneer het haar eigen onderzoeksveld wordt toebedeeld, niet op willekeurige basis, maar als behorende tot de filosofie naar diens eigen wezen, en wiens grenzen niet overschreden mogen worden door het inlaten van de methodes en principes van natuurlijk denken. Filosofie is hier een zeer precies gedefinieerde discipline die de tand des tijds moet weerstaan door de fluctuerende opvattingen en kennisvoortschrijdingen in de empirische wetenschappen buiten te sluiten.

Deze grotere verschillen tussen Kant, McDowell en Husserl, hier slechts ruw uiteengezet, zijn cruciaal voor het begrijpen van de rol van concepten in de waarneming in hun filosofieën. Door ze te bestuderen kunnen we de precieze

aantrekkingskracht van conceptualisme voor Kant en McDowell beter begrijpen. Voor zowel Kant als McDowell kunnen de bronnen daarvan, zo stel ik in mijn onderzoek, herleid worden tot een dominant naturalistisch denken. Kants conceptualisme lost een complexe puzzel op aangaande de onvoorwaardelijke geldigheid van bepaalde principes van objectieve cognitie; McDowells conceptualisme weer een andere puzzel betreffende rationele verantwoording en de relatie tussen de domeinen van de natuur en de rede. Voor beide past het conceptualisme binnen bredere filosofisch programma's die dus ver verwijderd staan van Husserls 'onnatuurlijke' filosofie.

Omdat Husserl constructief-theoretisch denken binnen de filosofie uitsluit, verliest het conceptualisme in de bekende vormen van Kant en McDowell bij hem veel grip. Met andere woorden, Husserl, zo beweer ik, heeft het conceptualisme niet nodig om de een of andere filosofisch-theoretische puzzel op te lossen. Uiteraard maakt dit het stellen van het conceptualistische vraagstuk met betrekking tot Husserl niet minder belangrijk. Integendeel, het bestuderen van Husserl helpt juist om de diepere conceptuele bronnen en mogelijkheidsvoorwaarden van het conceptualisme te verhelderen.

Tegelijkertijd toont mijn onderzoek in gedetailleerde studies aan dat aspecten van het conceptualisme wel degelijk fenomenologisch gegrond zijn, ongeacht de kwestie of de specifieke probleemoplossende kracht van de conceptualistische theorieën binnen de fenomenologie stand houdt. In het derde en vierde hoofdstuk laat ik onder meer zien dat Husserl vormen van non-conceptuele inhoud onderschrijft die ook hedendaagse analytische filosofen accepteren. Tegelijkertijd, zoals duidelijk wordt in het vierde hoofdstuk, biedt Husserls intentionaliteitsleer naar mijn interpretatie ondersteuning voor een zwakkere lezing van het conceptualisme.

In de laatste hoofdstukken beargumenteer ik dat Husserl vooral in zijn latere denken diepe inzichten verworven heeft in de verschillende manieren waarop onze passieve waarnemingen en handelingen altijd al zijn ingebed in bredere conceptuele structuren. Ons denken heeft dus volgens Husserl wel degelijk een beslissende invloed op onze waarneming. Tegelijkertijd is bij Husserl onze passieve waarneming in een specifieke 'genetische' zin juist bepalend voor de vorm van ons denkvermogen. Ik stel in het zesde en zevende hoofdstuk dat dit laatste niet alleen in strijd is met wat het conceptualisme stelt, maar ook nog eens geheel ondenkbaar (wegens verschillende redenen) binnen de conceptuele kaders van Kant en McDowell. Ik concludeer uiteindelijk dat Husserls latere filosofie een opvallend holistische kijk biedt op de relatie tussen waarnemen en denken –

zonder hierbij hermeneutische of coherentistische opvattingen ten aanzien van de verantwoording van kennisoordelen te accepteren.

Resultaten van dit onderzoek zijn gepubliceerd of in druk in enkele vooraanstaande filosofische tijdschriften, onder meer *Canadian Journal of Philosophy, The Southern Journal of Philosophy, International Journal of Philosophical Studies, Diametros* en de Springer-serie *Contributions to Phenomenology.*

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